



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

February 2, 2025



Epiphany Moments

Popularity Is Not Proof of Success

Though there will be times when Christ's gospel and those who proclaim it are popular, that popularity is never the goal. Nor does that popularity define success. If a church only focuses on things like personal improvement, healing for the sick, or social justice, that church may draw a crowd. It just fails to carry out the true agenda Christ has given his Church. The gospel of forgiveness is to be the center of all our preaching and teaching. The agenda for Christ's Church is set. It's the same agenda that was followed by the Church's Christ.

First Reading³ Jeremiah 1:4-10

Child-like Jeremiah is called to wield the powerful Word of the Lord. For all who proclaim it, there is comfort that its impact ought not be judged by the preacher. The reception for the Word of the Lord is in keeping with the Lord's intent. For some, the Word of the Lord comes to tear down, uproot, and overthrow. For others the Word of the Lord comes to build and plant in what was once a barren wasteland.

Second Reading³ 2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5

In this lesson from the apostle St. Paul's letter to Timothy, the inspired Word of the Lord testifies to the truth, changes hearts, and equips believers for lives of faithful service. As the world around us panders to whatever it wants to hear, it rejects the absolute truth of sin and grace. Yet, steeped in the Word, we are determined to proclaim the Word of the Lord to the benefit of God's holy people.

Gospel² Luke 4:38-44

Look at all the problems and all the obstacles to following the call of Jesus. Everybody in town seemed to have trouble or sickness or demon possession. Even the mother-in-law of Peter was down sick with a fever that prevented her from hearing the Word and from serving her divine Guest. But each one of the problems and hindrances was a blessing in disguise. For each one of them gave people a reason to despair of their own abilities and to seek in Jesus the compassionate and merciful Savior. Notice that Jesus' eyes were always and at the same time in two directions: down to rescue and to save us in our need, and up to do it all as an act of worship and obedience to his Father. He went on to proclaim the gospel and continue his work of casting out the devil.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 71 A "God Is My Strong Salvation"

The Church sings Psalm 71 in services that mention the saving work of the Lord in all stages of life, from infancy to old age. Because it is at the end of a section of psalms by David, people speculate that it was written by David near the end of his life. Martin Luther said, "As I understand it, Psalm 71 is a prayer psalm spoken by all Christians from the beginning to the end against all enemies and afflictions. It prays especially for old age, when a person becomes weak and gray. The psalm praises God's righteousness alone, which the psalm writer has learned from God since his youth."

Gospel Acclamation Luke 4:43

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God... because that is why I was sent." On one occasion, while Jesus was in Capernaum, many people brought to him the sick and demon possessed. After Jesus healed many of the people, he went off by himself to another place. The people found Jesus and tried to prevent him from leaving their town, presumably because they wanted him to perform more miracles and acts of healing. But Jesus refused. Though the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, he would not serve people on their terms; only giving them earthly blessings in this life. Even better, he would serve them by offering up his life unto death so they would be spiritually healed and blessed in the life to come.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, look with mercy on our weaknesses, and in all our dangers and needs stretch out the right hand of your majesty to help and defend us; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day 901 “O Christians, Haste” (Mary Thomson, 1834-1923)

Church Year Season ¹ Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

Colors & Symbolism Green

Green is the color of vegetation; therefore it symbolizes life. It represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord’s ministry.

Minor Festivals Presentation of Our Lord (February 2)

There is evidence of this festival being celebrated in Jerusalem as the end of the 4th century. The date of the festival (40 days after Christmas) is in recognition of when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem 40 days after his birth (Luke 2:22-40). In the Middle Ages the feast was known as Candlemas, in reference to the blessing and use of the many candles during the festival, and in connection to Simeon’s words about the infant Jesus, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).

Nain Paraments Epiphany

Superfrontal: The Greek symbol at the center of the superfrontal is the *Chi-Rho*. Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16)..... Next to the *Chi-Rho* are the letters *Alpha* (A) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13)..... The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Chi-Rho* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5)..... The blue wave at the bottom of the symbol represents both Holy Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) and the living water of the Word of Christ (John 7:37-38). The blue wave is intertwined with a vine of thorns, reminded us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to pay the price for our sins (John 19:2;30) and that believers are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection for their forgiveness and eternal salvation (Romans 6:3-4).

Lectern antependium: The circle surrounding the center of the Latin cross (†) symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. The Greek letters ΙΧΘΥΣ (pronounced: *Ichthys*) form both the word for fish and an acronym for the phrase, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” A simple drawing of a fish was used in the ancient Church in days of persecution. It symbolized Jesus Christ and also served as a code by which Christians identified themselves to one another as Christ’s followers. It also recalls Holy Baptism and is thus a symbol of Christian regeneration (John 3:5).

Pulpit antependium: The Anchor Cross symbolizes the sure and steadfast hope Christians have in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). The two fish remind us that Christians are followers of Jesus (see the description above), those who are brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19). During Epiphany the Church celebrates the many ways that Christ made himself known as true God to the world. One of these ways was his miracles. The two fish thus also remind us of Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two small fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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