



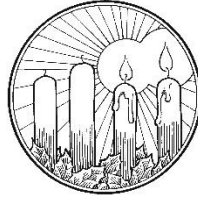
ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Second Sunday in Advent

December 7, 2025



Imminent Arrival of the Judge

The Second Sunday in Advent is traditionally known as “Populus Zion” Sunday. The Sunday derives its name from the Latin words of the Introit of the day: “Say to the daughter of Zion (*Populus Zion*), ‘See, your Savior comes!’” (Isaiah 62:11a).

The judge is an important person. You stand when he enters the courtroom. What he says must be obeyed. If you are the one on trial, his determinations make a big difference in how your life will continue. You might be quite nervous if the judge is about to arrive. St. John the Baptist invited people to turn their nervousness to repentance. He says that the arrival of the Judge is imminent, and the kingdom of heaven is near! Today, you are invited to hear John, repent, and believe the good news of your coming Savior, who has judged you “not guilty” on account of his perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection on your behalf.

First Reading¹

Isaiah 11:1-10

David’s dynasty died in 586 B.C. The Babylonians served as the ax of God that cut off the line of Jesse and made David’s family tree nothing but a stump. The lifeless stump was a witness to God’s judgment. But behold, a branch is growing! A new shoot sprouts from Jesse’s stump. God would renew the stump of David’s kingdom, but it wouldn’t be the restoration of an earthly rule and reign over Israel. No, God had greater things in mind. Instead, David’s greater Son would rule over a renewed earth and heaven. “I am making everything new” (Revelation 21:5). In this renewed kingdom, sin and its effects are gone; peace and righteousness rule. The Root of Jesse is a banner for the peoples, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Second Reading³

Romans 15:4-13

God renewed the hope of his people by raising up the root of Jesse. Hope in him reshapes our hearts and the resulting fruits of repentance show themselves in our renewed lives. Examples of those fruits can be seen in the unity of our walk and our witness and in our acceptance of our brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit brings forth such faith and fruit to the glory and praise of God.

Gospel¹

Matthew 3:1-12

A voice in the desert cried out, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” A fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, John dressed like the first Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and fulfilled the role of the second Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6) as foretold by Gabriel (Luke 1:17). Many people responded to John’s preaching with repentance, baptism, and spiritual renewal. Others neither repented nor produced the fruits of a life renewed by the Spirit. John warned them that God’s ax chops down unfruitful trees and leaves only stumps as witness to his judgment. John told both groups that the Messiah was near: near to the people to save them; near to the religious leaders to judge them. Harvest time had come, and God’s winnowing fork was in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 130 B

“Remember Your Mercy, O LORD”

The Church sings Psalm 130 in services that emphasize repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus. It is the 11th of the 15 songs of ascents (Psalms 120-134) and the 6th of the 7 penitential psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Martin Luther said, “Psalm 130 is a prayer psalm. The psalmist confesses that no one is righteous before God, and that no one can become righteous by their own works and righteousness. People can only become righteous through grace and the forgiveness of sins, which God has promised. The psalmist prophesies Christ in verse 8, and the entire psalm is based on this promise.”

Gospel Acclamation

Luke 3:4,6

“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. And all people will see God’s salvation.” John the Baptist was the one prophesied by Isaiah, “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord.’” John came to do one thing: to point to Christ. He prepares the way for his King by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming, give us strength in our conflicts, and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

316 “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” (Charles Coffin, 1676-1749)

The call to repentance – to prepare for Christ to enter our hearts (v2) – is only accomplished by the work of the King himself (vv3-4). We rejoice that Christ has entered our hearts through faith (vv3,5) and praise our Triune God because his advent has won our freedom from sin (v5).

Church Year Season³

Advent

Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh as a baby in Bethlehem, his return in judgment on the Last Day, and his present coming to us in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in a single word that defines Advent worship: “Come!” Throughout the prayers, hymns, and readings that single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus!

Colors & Symbolism

Blue

The traditional color for Advent is purple. Advent is a penitential season of preparation for Christmas; thus the color purple which symbolizes sorrow and repentance (along with royalty). Since another theme of Advent is hope and anticipation, the color blue (the sky) has come to be used in many churches to symbolize the believer’s hope and expectation of Jesus’ Second Coming.

Traditions & Customs

The Advent Wreath

A tradition of the Advent season is the lighting of candles on a wreath. Each light reminds us of Jesus, the Light of the world (John 8:12). Each Sunday we light an additional candle, providing a visual countdown to the celebration of Christ’s birth. On Christmas Eve we light the center candle, remembering Jesus’ nativity and the light and life that he brings (John 1:4,9).

Nain Paraments

Advent

Superfrontal: “Come Lord Jesus” is the Advent (meaning “coming” or “arrival”) prayer of Christians who await Christ’s promised return (Revelation 22:7,12,20) on the Last Day (Revelation 22:17,20), and who desire to eagerly receive Jesus now in the Gospel. The stars are representative of the Church’s anticipation of Jesus’ return when he will “appear in the sky...with great power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The stars also remind us of God’s creative work. They especially remind us of Jesus, the bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16) and Light of the World (John 8:12) who came to save us from the darkness of sin and death.

Lectern antependium: Chi (Χ) and Rho (Ρ) 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).

Pulpit antependium: Alpha (Α) and Omega (Ω) are 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).

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.

⁴ From *Christian Worship: Psalter* © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Reprinted by permission.

. Clipart courtesy of “Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas”