



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday after Christmas

December 28, 2025



Christ the Savior Is Born: Son of God

In today's Gospel, we hear about King Herod's attempt to destroy the Son of God. In response to Herod's edict and the angel of the Lord's directive, Joseph took Jesus and Mary and fled to Egypt. God was in control. The Lord did not abandon the holy family. He delivered them. It saddens us to hear that the other baby boys in and around Bethlehem died at the hand of the wicked king. At the same time, we are confident that nothing can rob us of the peace God brings us through his Son. Christ the Savior is born and continues to live, and through his life, God brings us into his family. He gives us the rights of redeemed children, the privilege of an everlasting inheritance.

First Reading¹

Isaiah 63:7-9

Isaiah extols the kindness of the LORD by reminding God's people of all that he has done for us. The LORD stood by his covenant even though his son, Israel, turned away from him. The LORD showed compassion and mercy to a people who did not deserve it. What but the kindness of God could look at Israel and us and still say, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"? That can only be said because of the work of God's only true and faithful Son, Jesus. God cared for his sons so much that in the fullness of time, the LORD became our Savior to redeem us. See how much God cares for his sons: when they are distressed, he is distressed; when they are in danger, he lifts them up and carries them. So now the sons of God join Isaiah saying, "I will tell of the kindness of the LORD."

Second Reading¹

Galatians 4:4-7

God's care for his sons meant preparing the world for the coming of Christ. The common language of Greek, the peace of the Roman Empire, the ability to travel, the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world—all these served to help the message of Jesus spread. But even more, the time was right for God to fulfill every prophetic promise to care for his children. He commissioned his own Son to become the God--man who subjected himself to law so that everyone under sin's curse might be bought back. The Incarnation of God meant that children of wrath could become the sons of God, and Pentecost proves our adoption as sons. The Spirit that cries, "Abba, Father," also testifies to our freedom from sin and our new status as heirs of God's kingdom.

Gospel¹

Matthew 2:13-23

At the birth of Christ, the angels announced good news and great joy meant for all people, but not everyone saw it that way: Herod reacted to the birth of Jesus with fear, opposition, and violence. The malice of Herod, however, could not rob the world of the peace God intended to bring through his Son. God cared for his Son and all the sons of God by using Joseph to keep him safe in the land of Egypt. The words of Hosea found their fulfillment at his return from Egypt—Jesus was Israel reduced to one. God cared for his sons by having his Son serve as their substitute. The closing words, "He will be called a Nazarene," are problematic since they are not found in the Old Testament prophets. Matthew might have intended a play on words between Nazareth and "branch," fulfilling Isaiah 11:1. Perhaps, though, he meant that Jesus' new hometown of Nazareth would contribute to the contempt that he would receive as a man (see John 1:45--46), thus fulfilling the word of the prophets that the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 2 B

"Why Do the Nations Conspire"

The Church sings Psalm 2 in services that emphasize the relationship of the Father and the Son. The Son rules with the same authority as the Father even when government officials try to thwart God's rule. The New Testament frequently quotes this psalm as applying to Christ, the Son of David. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 2 is a prophecy of how Christ will suffer and become King and Lord of the entire world. This psalm promises that those who believe in Christ will be blessed. Through Christ, God has delivered us from sin, death, and hell, and brought us to eternal life. This is the blessing that we pray for in the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, that his kingdom come."

Gospel Acclamation

Psalm 98:1

“Sing to the LORD a new song; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.”

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, the martyred innocents of Bethlehem showed forth your praise not by speaking but by dying. Put to death in us all that is in conflict with your will that our lives may bear witness to the faith we profess with our lips; 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

355 “Let All Together Praise Our God” (Nikolaus Herman, c. 1480-1561)

This hymn was part of a larger collection of hymns that the author based on the Gospel readings for each day of the Church Year. In it, he reflects on what it meant for almighty God to become a human being and what Jesus’ incarnation means for his people.

Church Year Season ¹

Christmas

The Christmas season celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God. The eternal Word became flesh that he might be the Christ, anointed to redeem God’s people. God had to become man to live under the law and die in our place. Christ’s birth, then, is inextricably connected to his death: Good Friday necessitated Christmas. So great is the love of God that even though our sin required such a sacrifice, the Light of the world still descended into our darkness.

Colors & Symbolism

White

White is the color of our Triune God and heaven. It also symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity and innocence. We receive these blessings through faith because Christ, our righteousness Savior, has forgiven all our sins.

Minor Festivals

Circumcision and Name of Jesus (January 1)

The child whose birth we celebrated last week came to fulfill the law. “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5). Jesus needed to fulfill the law to establish the gospel. This fulfillment was to be perfect. Therefore, meticulous attention to the Lord’s command is revealed with the words, “On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.”

Traditions & Customs

Christmas

In addition to lighting the Christ candle at the center of the Advent wreath, decorating the church and house (including the Christmas tree), setting up the Nativity scene, engaging in charitable acts, and giving and exchanging presents. many families follow the tradition of gathering around on Christmas Eve or Day and reading the nativity story from Luke 2. Although many consider Christmas Day as the end of the Christmas season, this is not the case. Traditionally, celebrations and festivities began on Christmas Day (or Christmas Eve night) and continued throughout the Christmas season. The Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* points to this. It was the practice to give/receive a gift on each of the twelve days; although some only celebrated during the ‘Christmas Octave,’ which was the eight days from Christmas Day through New Year’s Day.

Nain Paraments

Christmas

Superfrontal: “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God with us.” This name for Jesus Christ was revealed to God’s people through Isaiah in a prophecy of the Savior’s birth (7:14). The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph in a dream that the child in the Virgin Mary’s womb would be that promised Immanuel – God who had come to be with us (Matthew 1:23) in order to save us. Sometimes the name is spelled *Emmanuel*, which is the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of the same name.

The vines next to Immanuel represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: *The Greek Cross*: distinguished by four arms of equal length.

Pulpit antependium: *The Celtic Cross*: similar to the Latin cross (†), but with a circle surrounding the center, which symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

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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