



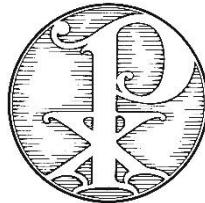
## ABOUT THE PROPERs

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



### Second Sunday after Christmas

January 4, 2026



Christ the Savior Is Born: The Dawn of Redeeming Grace

We continue the Christmas celebration of the dawning of the light of all mankind. The sin-darkened eyes of mankind cannot see God in his glory or the blessings Jesus came to bring. God, however, wants us to know him, and so he chose us by grace and enlightened us through the eyes of faith to see himself in Jesus, our flesh-and-blood Savior. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ reveals the unseen God to the eyes of the faithful. Jesus' love and grace shine into our hearts to assure us of the forgiveness that he won for us. Jesus came to make the unapproachable God known to us. He came to make the unseen God seen. When Christ the Savior is born, the light of new revelation breaks over the world. When the Son rises, we can clearly see the grace of God, our Redeemer.

#### First Reading<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3

The Messiah promises that the righteousness and glory of the unseen God will be made known to all nations. Then God speaks (62:1ff.) and shows the surprising way he will reveal his glory and righteousness: they will be seen in his people. No longer will they be called Desolate and Deserted. God speaks and makes our righteousness shine like the dawn, our salvation like a blazing torch. As a king's crown shows his power, so the righteousness of his people makes known the glory of the unseen God.

#### Second Reading<sup>1</sup>

Ephesians 1:3-18

Paul prays that the Ephesians might know God better. There is only one way for us to better see and know the unseen God: the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, must tell us. The way to know God better is to see exactly what he has done for us (vv. 3---6) and what he will yet do for us (vv. 13---14). The wisdom that comes from the revelation of the Gospel enlightens the eyes of believing hearts (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6) and lets them see and know the hope to which they have been called. This hope is certain because God's people already have the deposit (v. 14), and the promise was made by their adoptive Father (v.5).

#### Gospel<sup>1</sup>

John 1:14-18

John 1:14 occurs in the Gospel for Christmas Day and for Christmas 2. The point of Christmas Day is that God became flesh. The emphasis on Christmas 2 is that the Incarnation reveals the unseen God to us. The sin-darkened eyes of mankind cannot see God in his glory; he must remain hidden in unapproachable light. God, however, wanted us to know him and so God chose to reveal himself by hiding himself in flesh and blood. This is the great mystery of the Incarnation: Christ is the exegesis of God. Jesus Christ – himself God the one and Only – came to make the unapproachable God known to us; he came to make the unseen God seen.

#### Psalm of the Day<sup>4</sup>

Psalm 135 A

“Sing Praise to God”

The Church sings Psalm 135 to distinguish between false gods and the only true God. The opening is like Psalm 134, and verses 15-18 are like parts of Psalm 113 and Isaiah 40-46. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 135 is a psalm of thanks, calling on priests to preach, praise God for the wonders he did for the people in Egypt and Canaan, and give thanks. People are not to forget the true God, seeking idols or other gods, which happens when they do not occupy themselves with preaching and the praise of God.”

## Gospel Acclamation

## Psalm 98:3

“All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” God has revealed his salvation through the righteous acts performed on behalf of his people. We know God is righteous, loving, and faithful to his people because of what he has done for us and what he has told us in his Word. This testament to his covenant commitment is proclaimed to the nations.

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all we do; 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

## 383 “The Only Son from Heaven” (Elizabeth Cruciger, 1500-35 v1-3; LBW, 1978 v4)

When the time had come, God sent his Son from heaven in human form. The virgin born Christ is our Morning Star, the anointed King, who has come to conquer death, bring life, and open heaven for sinners. Thus we adore our holy, blessed Trinity.

## Church Year Season<sup>1</sup>

## 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.

## 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.

## Names of Christ

## 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.

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

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

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

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

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