



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 25, 2026



Identity Revealed: Jesus Is the Light

The prophet Isaiah vividly described humanity as a “people walking in darkness.” As fallen people living in a fallen world, we are completely enveloped by sin and suffering and death. Worse, when we honestly assess the content of our minds and hearts, we find darkness there too. However, the prophet also foretold that within this deep darkness, a light would shine. The light would be so brilliant that it would be impossible to miss. As Jesus began his teaching and preaching ministry, Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled. As God promised, his Son, Jesus Christ came to shine the light of his gospel on “those living in the land of the shadow of death.” And so this light would dawn on many more, Jesus called disciples to follow him and preach the gospel of the kingdom.

First Lesson ¹

Isaiah 8:19 – 9:4

Man cannot find his way through the darkness of the world except by inquiring of God. No spirit, no man, no other message brings light to those living in darkness. To the law and to the testimony! There you find the Word, the great light for those living in darkness.

Second Reading

1 John 2:3-11

Jesus, our Morning Star, has already come, and the light of his dawn is beginning to break over the world, and the time for deeds of darkness is fading fast. There are still places of deep darkness, but that is not the place to find God’s children. They will be found walking in the light and shedding their own light on the darkness around them by living in love for God and brother.

Gospel ¹

Matthew 4:12-23

The light of the world appeared and began to cast its beams. Fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy, the bulk of Christ’s ministry took place in Galilee of the Gentiles which had been so oppressed. Galileans were the first to see the light of God’s day breaking over the world. From that time on, Jesus began to preach, and we hear the first public words of Jesus Christ: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. With those words the Holy Spirit describes Jesus shining his light into the shadowed nooks and crannies of the world. From fishing boats to synagogues, from workmen to lame men, Christ cast a beacon of light into the darkened world around him with his three-fold ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing. The kingdom of heaven drew near and called God’s children to follow the light and live in the light.

Psalm of the Day ⁴

Psalm 27 C

“The LORD Is My Light and My Salvation”

The Church sings Psalm 27 in services that emphasize the victory of the light of the Lord over darkness and unbelief, false gods and false doctrine. The psalmist makes many confident assertions of faith during days of trouble. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 27 is a psalm of thanksgiving, even though you might not see it at first. It is meant to comfort you when you encounter false teachers, which it calls false witnesses, people who blaspheme without being shy about it. For only good and foolish believers would testify about the promises of God with appropriate certainty and freshness, and daily we see that the more good and unlearned the people are, the more beautifully foolish and fresh they are to teach and preach to the entire world.”

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 9:2

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 3:19).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom and teach with authority. Anoint us with the power of your Spirit that we too may bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive; 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

904 “O Christ, Our True and Only Light” (Johann Heermann, 1585-1647)

Church Year Season ²

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

St. Timothy (January 24) & St. Titus (January 26), Pastors and Confessors

Timothy was raised by a Jewish mother who believed in Christ and by a Greek father. We first encounter Timothy in Acts 16, when he meets Paul and joins Paul in his mission work. Titus heard the Gospel preached by Paul, and God used that experience to bring Titus to faith in Jesus. Titus then became a steadfast worker in the mission field with Paul.

Minor Festivals

Conversion of St. Paul (January 25)

God’s act of bringing Saul, a persecutor of Christians, to faith in Christ (cf. Acts 9) teaches us that faith is given to us by God as a gift.

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: *Ichthus*) 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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