



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 21, 2024



Resurrection Reality

The Risen Savior Provide Good Shepherding

The word “pastor” comes from the Latin word for “shepherd.” Today, there are plenty of people – pastors, religious leaders, etc. – who claim they can provide healing for your soul. Yet, Scripture warns that “many” of these are “false prophets” (1 John 4:1) who “twist the truth” (Acts 20:30). Many! But the resurrection reality is that our Good Shepherd is faithful. He will raise up true sub-shepherds who know Christ and proclaim the truth of his gospel.

The Propers

The Propers are those portions of the service that change (i.e. are “proper” to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin ordo, which means “regular order”) portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord’s Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.

First Reading

Acts 20:28-32

The good shepherd asks his sub-shepherds to keep watch over the flock.

Second Reading

1 John 4:1-6

St. John encourages us to test all those who claim to have a spiritual message. Not all such individuals have been sent by God.

Gospel²

John 10:11-18

The whole work of Jesus from Christmas to Easter had this in mind, that he should be and remain our Good Shepherd and we should be and remain his sheep. All in all, it’s a bad bargain for the shepherd! The hired hand acts rationally. He is worth more intrinsically and certainly to himself than a hundred sheep and shouldn’t die for any of them. In the case of Jesus that is true a thousand fold. But look what happens! Everything is upside down and backwards. He for whom the whole of creation exists freely and willingly sacrifices himself for the sheep who add nothing to his own infinite worth. The Father even agrees with that sacrifice. For it is his will that the Shepherd become the Good Shepherd in just this way. So much they love the flock! You would have to be a stone not to be moved by such love *for you!* Listen to his voice! It gives the life that he laid down and has now taken up again.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 23 A

“I Will Live in the House of the LORD.” Kings were often spoken of as shepherds, but the Shepherd-King of Israel is a monarch unlike any other. The Lord is our shepherd who provides for all of our needs in life and death.

Gospel Acclamation

John 10:14

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” Jesus spoke these words among of the Pharisees who were challenging his authority after he healed a man born blind. Those who believe in Jesus as the Christ know him as their Good Shepherd and enjoy the close, loving, relationship (the Good Shepherd knows his sheep) that can’t be replicated by the false shepherds who try to steal the flock away from Christ.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

552 "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (Henry W. Baker, 1821-77)

The six stanzas of this hymn correlate closely to the six verses of Psalm 23. In this hymn, we contemplate the good care that our Good Shepherd gives us. Even as we often stray away from him "confused and foolish," and obviously do not deserve his mercy, God surrounds us with his gracious care. Truly his "goodness fails (us) never."

Church Year Season ¹

Easter

After forty days of repentance and prayer, the Church bursts forth in jubilant praise at the Resurrection of our Lord. The alleluias and glorias which were muted for Lent ring out again as the Bride of Christ welcomes her Bridegroom back from the dead. Easter is as the pinnacle of the Church Year, the oldest festival and season celebrated by the worshipping Church. For a full week-of-weeks (49 days) the Church celebrates the resurrection of Christ on the Sundays of Easter which culminate on the 50th day, Pentecost.

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.

Nain Paraments

Easter

Superfrontal: *Alleluia* is taken from a Hebrew word which means, "Praise the LORD." It is a word of joy and gladness and most commonly used in the Psalms (e.g. 103). An ancient custom is to refrain from using the term during Lent in order to distinguish the penitential nature of that season from the joy and hope filled nature of the Easter season that follows. The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Alleluia* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God's children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: The doves flying in front of the cross represent purity, innocence (Matthew 10:16), as well as spiritual and eternal rest (Psalm 55:6). When the dove has an olive branch or leaf in its beak, it is a symbol of hope and peace (Genesis 8:11). Each of these blessings and more come by Jesus' death on the cross and through the gift of faith (Galatians 1:3,4).

Pulpit antependium: The cross is formed by the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). Chi and Rho 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). The vines and vegetation branching out from the cross represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God's children, the branches (John 15:5).

Traditions & Customs

The Paschal Candle

Paschal, meaning "having to do with the Passover," is a word associated with Easter. It was at the conclusion of the Jewish Passover Festival (the "Pasch") that Jesus rose from the dead and proved himself to be the true Passover Lamb whose blood removes sin and death (Ex 12; 1 Cor 6:6-8). The candle is lit for services during Easter to symbolize that Christ is alive and lives among us. The candle is also lit for Baptisms and funerals, reminding us of our resurrection to eternal life.

Minor Festivals

St. Mark, Evangelist (April 25)

St. Mark, the Evangelist, was a close associate with several of the apostles. He is believed to be identified as John-Mark of Acts and the cousin of Barnabas. Despite their earlier differences, he reconciled with Paul, who considered him "very useful...for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Later, he worked in Rome (1 Peter 5:13), where tradition has it that he wrote his Gospel from St. Peter's sermons before founding the church in Alexandria and facing a martyr's death. He is remembered as the lion-hearted evangelist, depicted with his fellow evangelists as the four living creatures of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4.

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. Gawrich, Author.

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