

*In these worship sheets you will find twenty-one short explanations of each step in the Divine Service. Included in each explanation is a short history of the origin of that portion of the worship service, the purpose it serves, the liturgical practice involved in this section of the worship service, and the connection you can make throughout the remainder of the week with Luther's Small Catechism and the hymnal. For those congregations using Lutheran Service Book, Luther's Small Catechism is found on pages 321-330. These sheets may be used as a weekly insert in your bulletin or distributed individually or as a packet to junior and adult confirmation classes.*

*The Wyoming Worship Committee [1997] greatly thanks the Worship Committee of the Iowa District East [1997] for the idea and their examples, upon which these inserts are modeled, modified and expanded. Even though these inserts are not copyrighted in and of themselves, some material referred to in them is. In keeping with the letter and spirit of the Seventh Commandment, please observe proper copyright laws and give credit where credit is due. Below are sources that were used in this project and/or are recommended as further resources for history, use and information concerning the Divine Service.*

**Originally prepared by Pastor Mark Maas, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming and Pastor Shawn Kumm, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Laramie, Wyoming using the following resources:**

*Introduction to Christian Worship.* James F. White. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980.

*Lutheran Worship,* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982.

*Lutheran Worship: Altar Book.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982.

*Lutheran Worship: History and Practice.* Edited by Fred L. Precht. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993.

*The Lutheran Hymnal.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

*The Lutheran Liturgy.* Luther Reed. Philadelphia: Mulhenberg Press, 1947.

*The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship.* Edited by J. G. Davies. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986.

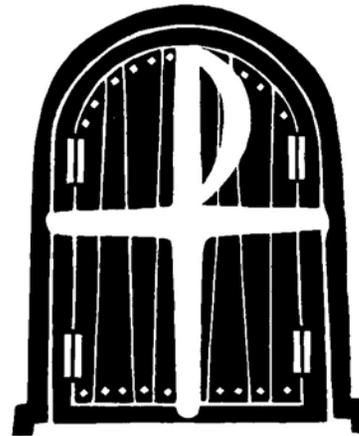
*Meaningful Worship: A Guide to the Lutheran Service.* James L. Brauer. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994.

Gently updated for use with *Lutheran Service Book* in 2008.

+ In Memoriam +  
**The Reverend Barclay Brown**  
**Former Chairman of the Wyoming District Worship Committee**  
**7 April 1934 — 20 June 1997**

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# Worship Word of the Week



Updated *LSB* Edition, 2008



**LHP**  
Digital Worship Resources  
from the LCMS Wyoming District



## Invocation

### Origin

The words of the Invocation—*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*—echo the mandate of Jesus spoken in Matthew 28:19, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

### Purpose

The Gospel is immediately established by the Invocation. Even in the earliest days of the Old Testament, God declared, “In every place where I record my name I will come to you, and I will bless you” (Exodus 20:24). God’s name establishes God’s gracious presence and where God’s grace is, there also is life and salvation.

The Invocation also points us to Baptism. With the water these words first gave us new life in our Triune God. As these words were first spoken to us in Baptism the Holy Spirit came to us and gave to us salvation. The Invocation is, therefore, the purest Gospel reminding us of God’s saving presence among us as we worship and also within us by virtue of our Baptism.

The Invocation as it stands is an incomplete sentence. It is an “echo” through time which reminds us that it is God—and God alone—who has called order out of chaos, as we read in Scripture: “In the beginning God created...” (Genesis 1:1), “In the beginning was the Word...” (John 1:1). We also learn and confess in the explanation to Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed) that it is specifically the Third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—who “calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth.”

### Practice

While speaking the Invocation, the pastor and people may make the sign of the cross. The sign of the cross is made in remembrance of Baptism, when Christians are first marked with the cross over heads and hearts and washed in the name of the Holy Trinity. In *Luther’s Small Catechism* Luther recommends the sign of the cross to begin one’s prayers on arising and retiring. This physical action reminds us how God marked us as His own through the cross of Jesus.

The sign of the cross is made by holding the palm of the right hand flat, thumb and fingers together, and by touching with the tips of the fingers the forehead (“My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven”), then the breast (“and was incarnate for me”), the right shoulder (“and was crucified for me”), and finally the left shoulder (“and entered into my heart”). This is the early form. In the Latin, or Western Christian tradition, the last movement is made from left to right. While making this sign, the left hand may be held flat against the body a little below the breast.<sup>+</sup>

### For Your Devotions This Week...

Read “The Sacrament of Holy Baptism” from *Luther’s Small Catechism*, which is also located in the front of *Lutheran Service Book*, p. 325. Include the Invocation in your daily devotions, Bible study and prayer life.

Discuss how this part of the Divine Service “connects” with the catechism reading and with your personal life.

A hymn to sing: “Baptized into Your Name Most Holy,” *LSB* 590.

Note: The Invocation is part of the Preparation section of the Divine Service. The worship service may begin with a Hymn of Invocation which can reflect the confessional nature of this preparatory rite, the theme of the day or the time of the day (morning or evening). There may be circumstances when the preparation (Invocation, Confession and Absolution) are omitted altogether, such as when celebrating Holy Baptism.

<sup>+</sup> *Lutheran Worship Altar Book*. St. Louis: CPH, 1982, pp. 26-27.

# Confession and Absolution



## Origin

Ultimately, Confession and Absolution goes back to Scripture. Our statement of trust in God's mercy is from Psalm 124:8, "*Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*"

Our confidence that God will grant forgiveness is from Psalm 32:5, "*I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*"

The New Testament also gives witness to the importance of Confession and Absolution. St. John writes, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:8-9).

## Purpose

The purpose of a public confession of sins at the beginning of the service is that we be prepared to receive the grace of God mercifully given throughout the Divine Service. Gathered together by the Holy Spirit around the Name of God in the Invocation, we now humbly admit we bring nothing worthy to God for the goodness we are about to receive.

In Medieval times, this part of the service was conducted outside the nave (the main gathering worship space). The Confession and

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Absolution was—and still is—preparatory to the entire Divine Service. Once the people confessed their sins and received absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor, only then did they consider themselves prepared and worthy to come into the house of God and receive the treasures of His grace. The heart and purpose of Confession and Absolution is pure Gospel. God is the giver of forgiveness; we are the recipients of this gift of God.

## Practice

Confession and Absolution as a public rite and preparation for the Divine Service developed in the early Middle Ages. Originally, this type of confession was spoken by the pastor prior to the service in order to acknowledge his own unworthiness to lead worship. Gradually, it came to be spoken aloud with the congregation.

In our day, the practice of public confession puts us in mind of our deep and utter sinfulness—sinfulness which has permeated all we have wrongly thought, said and done, and all we have not rightly thought, said and done. Put into proper perspective, we now receive the richness of Jesus' grace and know we need not fear the judgment of God because our Savior has redeemed us from God's wrath.

## For Your Devotions This Week...

Read the section entitled "Confession" from *Luther's Small Catechism*, which is also located in the front of *Lutheran Service Book*, p. 326. Also prayerfully consider the place and practice in your personal, family and congregational life: the "Service of Corporate Confession and Absolution," *LSB* 290, and "Individual Confession and Absolution," *LSB* 292.

A hymn to sing: "Lord, to You I Make Confession," *LSB* 608.

For more information see *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, pp. 403-407.

## The Introit



### Origin

*“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name”* (Psalm 100:4), sings out the psalmist and people

as they enter into the Lord’s temple. The introit (from the Latin *introitus*, entrance) is a psalm or a portion of psalm which indicates the preparatory part of the service is concluded and the first part of Divine Service—the Service of the Word—is now to begin. In the early church the Introit was chanted as the clergy entered the church and processed to the altar.

### Purpose

The Introit provides a meditative step between the Confession and Absolution and receiving the blessings of God’s Word soon to be heard. The introit still serves its original purpose in that, after we have confessed our sins and received forgiveness, we are made worthy to enter into God’s presence and receive further blessings from Him.

A typical Introit is “book-ended” by an antiphon, that is, usually one Psalm verse, perhaps a New Testament verse (as for Easter Sunday) or occasionally a short liturgical text (as for Trinity Sunday) which begins and ends the body of the introit. Originally the antiphon was sung by the congregation as a response to each verse of the psalm or a group of verses. The antiphon, along with the body of the Introit, which are both chosen to complement the theme of the day, immediately set the tone of all that is to be heard and proclaimed from God’s Word.

The Psalms—the hymnal of ancient Israel, Jesus, and the early Christian Church—are still sung and said by today’s Church, tying together Old and New Testament believers around the Savior of whom

the Psalms sing.

The Gloria Patri (“Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...”) serves as a doxology (a word of praise) at the end of the psalm verses, which proclaims to all that the Church sees the Psalms centered around and fulfilled by Christ Himself. Only during Holy Week is the Gloria Patri omitted because of its more festive nature.

### Practice

If the Confession and Absolution part of the service is led from the entrance of the church, from the steps of the chancel or from the baptismal *font*, the Introit may still serve its original purpose as theme-setting “traveling” music for the pastor to move from one area of the church to another.

The Introit may be replaced with the appointed psalm of the day or with an entrance hymn which may be a hymnic paraphrase of the Introit or psalm. (For example, “Joy to the World” is a metrical paraphrase of Psalm 98.)

### For Your Devotions This Week...

Find the appointed Introit of the Day (which carries the congregations throughout the week) in your bulletin or on your bulletin insert. How does this Word of God summarize and support your spiritual life this week? *Note:* Previously, the Introit was printed in *TLH* or *LW*. For example, the Introit for the First Sunday in Advent is found on *TLH*, p. 54 or *LW*, p. 10.

A hymn to sing: “The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want,” *LSB* #710. Compare this hymn text with Psalm 23, which is the Psalm (and Introit in Year B) for Good Shepherd Sunday the Fourth Sunday of Easter in the Three-Year Lectionary and *Misericordias Domini*, the Third Sunday of Easter in the Historic One-Year Lectionary.

Review the First Table of the Law (Commandments 1, 2 and 3 found in *Luther’s Small Catechism* and in *LSB*, p. 321). In what ways does the Introit serve the purpose of showing God to be the only God in worship, keeping His name holy and remembering His day of rest?

## The Kyrie



### Meaning

“Kyrie, Eleison” is a Greek phrase which means “Lord (Kyrie), have mercy (Eleison).”

### Origin

Early liturgies inserted a prayer of the faithful after the Introit. This prayer took the shape of a responsive prayer in the mid-fourth century. The Kyrie, over the years, has taken different forms with as many as ten versicles with response being used as a prayer asking for forgiveness. The original intent of the Kyrie was

not to be penitential asking for forgiveness, but as an acclamation of the blessing the Lord will bring as we are in His presence. The Lord has come to meet His people as they begin their worship. The Kyrie resembles the Hebrew “Hosanna (save now),” a cry for help or favor.

### Purpose

The Kyrie, being the first prayer of the service carries great spiritual depth. Here in the presence of God we seek His aid and favor. Forgiveness has already been asked for and received in the confession and absolution. Now in the Kyrie we seek

the Lord’s favor and blessing. We ask for this not merely for ourselves (*LSB* Divine Service settings 1 and 2), but very unselfishly we seek peace and unity in the church, the state and the world. The Kyrie is brought to a close with the great acclamation of what our Lord is accomplishing “help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.”

The Kyrie raises the service to lofty levels as it expresses a cry for help in times of need. We see this theme in the Psalms: 25:16; 26:11; 1

23:3ff, and it is carried on in the New Testament as people reach out to the Lord: Matthew 9:27; 15:22; Luke 17:13; 18:38-39. Jesus responds to their request by restoring them through His mighty power.

Here, we are seeking help from the Lord, in whose presence we have gathered. That help will come to us as we continue in this liturgical journey and hear the Lord speak to our concerns and restore us in His power during this time of worship.

### For Your Devotions This Week...

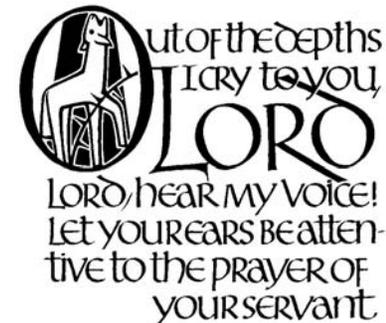
Hymns to reflect on:

- ✠ “Kyrie, God Father,” *LSB* #942,
- ✠ “Your Heart, O God, Is Grieved,” *LSB* #945
- ✠ God of Mercy, God of Light, *LSB* #852
- ✠ From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee,” *LSB* #607

Please read in the Scriptures:

- ✠ Exodus 33:19-23
- ✠ Psalm 57
- ✠ Mark 10:46-52
- ✠ Ephesians 2:1-10

Read “The Close of the Commandments” and First Article of the Creed in *Luther’s Small Catechism*, p. 322 in *Lutheran Service Book*.



## Hymn of Praise



### Origin

Here the people of God are offered options for this hymn. Both the “Gloria in Excelsis” and “This is the Feast” are hymns of the angels. The Gloria was sung to the shepherds at the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ. “This is the Feast” is sung by the angels to commemorate the resurrection and the ultimate victory of the Son of God. The text for this hymn is drawn from Revelation 5:9-13; 19:4-9.

“The Gloria” was first introduced into the liturgy as a song of Thanksgiving. Its history traces back to 530 A.D.

where it was sung as part of the Christmas Eve celebration. 600 years would pass before it was given common usage in the liturgy.

“This is the Feast” first appears in its liturgical form in 1970 with the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship in *Contemporary Worship 2*.

### Purpose

As the people of God move from the Kyrie to the Hymn of Praise there is a noticeable change of mood. Moving from the subdued tones of the Kyrie to the Hymn of Praise for the Trinity, joy and jubilation resound. In both hymns, the work of the Trinity for our salvation is emphasized, with the central figure of this activity of God being Christ, the Lamb of God. Here, now, as we stand in the presence of the Divine, His forgiveness (the Absolution), His assured aid (Lord, have mercy) moves us to resplendent praise. We recall God’s gracious act of deliverance in Jesus Christ, wherein the people of God are saved.

### Practice

There are seasonal Options that can be taken advantage of at this time

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in the liturgy also, which could be used to help bring out the movement of the Church year. During Advent, you may substitute the hymn “O, Come, O, Come, Emmanuel,” *LSB* #357. In Lent, consider “The Royal Banners Forward Go,” *LSB* #455. Hymn options include “All Glory Be to God on High” and “All Glory Be to God Alone” both of which paraphrase the traditional “Gloria” (see below).

### For Your Devotions This Week...

Hymns to reflect on:

- ✠ “All Glory Be to God on High,” *LSB* # 947
- ✠ “All Glory Be to God Alone,” *LSB* # 948
- ✠ “Heavenly Hosts in Ceaseless Worship,” *LSB* #949
- ✠ “Splendor and Honor,” *LSB* #950

Please read in the Scriptures:

- ✠ Luke 2
- ✠ Revelation 5:9-13
- ✠ Revelation 19:4-9

Read the Second Article of the Creed in *Luther’s Small Catechism*, pp. 322-323 in *Lutheran Service Book*.



## The Salutation and Collect

### Origin

The Salutation is a greeting and a response. The thought behind it is akin to the Hebrew word, Emmanuel, meaning, “God with us”. The thought behind the greeting is to unite Pastor and people. As Pastor Wilhelm Loehe writes “the bonds of love between pastor and people are tied anew.”



The Salutation, “The Lord be with you,” is to be a part of every day speech between the people of God. This greeting is seen repeatedly in the Scriptures; as it reaches back to Boaz and Ruth in Ruth 2:4. The Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon and says “the Lord is with you,” Judges 6:12. The Archangel Gabriel when he appears to Mary announces, “Hail, you who are highly favored, the Lord is with you,” Luke 1:28. Paul in His writings uses the same thought in 2 Thessalonians 3:16 and 2 Timothy 4:22. The purpose of the Salutation is to express the certainty that since we are in the presence of God, it is His desire is to be here with us, and we are blessed by that presence.

The response to “The Lord be with you” in *LSB* appears as either “And also with you” or “And with thy/your spirit.” The latter is a far more accurate translation of the Latin, “*Et cum spiritu tuo.*”

The collect is a collection of the thoughts for a particular Sunday or festival and have been a part of the liturgy of the church for nearly fifteen centuries. The collect seeks to emphasize the theme of the day and a particular need or desire the child of God has in relation to that theme. Pastor Wilhelm Loehe spoke of the collect in this way: a collect is “the breath of a soul, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, brought to the eternal Father in the name of His Son.”

### The Structure of the Collect

*Address:* names the person of the Trinity to whom the prayer is particularly addressed.

*Rationale:* notes the particular characteristic of God upon which this prayer is predicated.

*Petition:* states the prayer, the blessing being asked.

*Benefit:* gives the goal toward which the petition is directed.

*Termination:* “who lives and reigns...,” a doxology.

### The Collect for Palm Sunday Follows this Pattern

*Address:* Almighty and everlasting God,

*Rationale:* You sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross.

*Petition:* Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience

*Benefit:* and be made partakers of His resurrection;

*Termination:* through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

(Collect reproduced from *LSB Propers of the Day*, p. 34.)

### For Your Devotions This Week...

Hymns to reflect on:

- ✠ “Abide of Dearest Jesus,” *LSB* 919,
- ✠ “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide,” *LSB* 585
- ✠ “Stay with Us,” *LSB* 879
- ✠ “Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ,” *LSB* 769
- ✠ “Hear Us Father, When We Pray,” *LSB* 773

From the Scriptures read: John: 17; Psalm 86; Ruth 2; 2 Timothy 4.

Read the Third Article of the Creed; page 323 in *LSB*.

## The Scripture Readings

In the service thus far God has been introducing Himself to us and we to Him. Recognizing that we are in the presence of the Divine and Holy One, we await the message He desires to bring to us.

God brings to us His glorious message through the Scripture readings. The practice of keeping a certain order to the readings for every Sunday and festival day dates back to the time of the Apostles. The three great festivals- Christmas, Easter and Pentecost were the first to have specific readings designated.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod recognizes two orders of readings called Lectionaries. There is a One-Year series (the elder of the two systems) and the Three-Year series. The Three Year series was adapted from the Roman Catholic Church in 1969 and is used in most Protestant churches.

### **Purpose**

We receive the message of our God from His divinely inspired and inerrant Word. Our God now speaks to us with a message we need to hear. That saving message doesn't change. It is centered in the Lord, Jesus Christ the one who died and rose for our salvation.

### **Practice**

The general practice in the Lutheran Church is to have an Old Testament Reading, where God is revealed as being present with His people to reprove, direct or bless them. The Old Testament points forward to the Savior who was to come. The Gradual Psalmody follows where a portion of a Psalm or whole Psalm is sung to bridge the Old Testament Reading to the Epistle. The Epistle Reading is from the letters (Epistles) of the Apostles. The Epistles speak of the Christ

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who had come and would come again. Then follows the verse or Alleluias. The verse is also appointed for each Sunday, (see *Lutheran Service Builder*, *Lutheran Service Book: Propers of the Day* or *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*) and changes throughout the year. The Alleluia verse is a song of triumph and joy. Early Christians used the Alleluia verse as an acclamation of faith and joy in their daily work. The purpose behind both the Alleluia and verse is to introduce the Gospel and prepare for hearing it. Then follows the Gospel reading; the pinnacle of the first half of the service, the liturgy of the word. The God who is present among us, asks us to hear from His Son and to focus on His life. Great awe and reverence attends this reading.

### **Liturgical Practice**

Special reverence is shown at the Gospel reading. Recorded for us here are the words of the Incarnate God, God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The Gospel reading is the final reading to reveal the special honor it holds. The Old Testament and Epistle readings support the Gospel reading to emphasize its centrality in all we do. The congregation stands in honor of Jesus. Special acclamations surround this reading. Our Savior is speaking to us anew!

An ancient practice is resurging and that is the Gospel procession. In this practice a crucifer and torchbearer lead a procession to the midst of the congregation for the Gospel reading. This practice is done for two reasons: 1) to reveal that the Lord has come among His people and 2) to remind His people the Gospel is to go into the entire world.

### **For Your Devotions This Week...**

Hymns to reflect on:

- ✠ “Thy Strong Word,” *LSB* 578,
- ✠ “The Law of God Is Good and Wise,” *LSB* 579
- ✠ “The Gospel Shows the Father’s Grace,” *LSB* 580

From the Scriptures: Psalms 113-119; Luke 4:16-21; John 1.

Read: Commandments 1, 2, and 3 on page 321 in *LSB*.

## The Gradual and the Verse (The Propers, Part II)

### Origin

A Gradual is a portion of God's Word chosen for the day or season to emphasize and reflect a certain theme present in the scripture readings. Originally, the gradual was a psalm sung by a solo cantor to which the congregation responded with a brief interjection, such as Alleluia, or a verse from the psalm itself. This portion of psalm receives its name from its Latin meaning, *gradus*, "step," to describe a step in the chancel from where the gradual was sung by the solo voice. A gradual usually has its source in the Psalms, but occasionally New Testament passages are also used.

The verse serves as yet another pause between scripture readings, providing a few moments for God's Word to soak in. Whereas the gradual responds to the Old Testament reading, the verse pushes the worshipper forward to the Gospel reading. The verse may be an Old Testament or New Testament verse bookended by "Alleluias" (Greek version of the Hebrew "Hallelujah," meaning "Praise the Lord"). The exception is during the season of Lent when alleluias are not spoken or sung.

### Purpose

As they are used today, both the gradual and the verse still retain their original purpose. The gradual helps the worshipper "step" and reflect upon the Old Testament reading while moving on toward the Epistle or Second Reading. Whether sung by a soloist, chanted by a choir or spoken by the congregation, the gradual provides movement in the worship service. The verse anticipates the glorious presence of Christ in the Gospel reading and therefore joyfully exclaims the coming of His Word.

### Practice

As reflected in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, the gradual came between the Epistle and the Gospel reading with the Old Testament reading usually being omitted (although these may be located on pages 159-160 of

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*TLH*). With the revision of the lectionary (the series of scripture readings), the Old Testament reading has been restored to its rightful place, and following in its path, so has the gradual. The gradual may be replaced with the appointed psalm for the day.

When the verse is sung or spoken the congregation stands in reverence and respect for the Gospel reading about to be heard. During Lent, the joyous alleluias surrounding the verse are put away until the Resurrection of the Lord is celebrated. Note that the Gradual changes throughout the non-festival half of the Church Year:

**Trinity Tide, Proper 3-7**  
**(May 24-28) to (June 19-25)**

**Apostles' Tide, Proper 8-13**  
**(June 26-July 2) to (July 31-Aug. 6)**

**Martyrs' Tide, Proper 14 to Proper 19**  
**(Aug. 7-16) to (Sept. 11-Sept. 17)**

**Angels' Tide, Proper 20 to 25**  
**(Sept. 18-Sept. 24) to (Oct. 23-29)**

**All Saints' Tide, Proper 26 to 29**  
**(Oct. 30-Nov. 5) to (Nov. 20-26)**



### For Your Devotions This Week...

Review the First Table of the Law (The First, Second and Third Commandments). In what ways does the gradual help you "step" through the week or weeks in which the same gradual is used? Consider the three Scripture readings for the most recent Sunday. Who of your family or friends needs to hear these words of God's strength, comfort and guidance in order that they may "step" confidently with Christ this week? Share these words in a note, phone call or conversation.

Hymns to reflect on:

- ✝ "One Thing's Needful," *LSB* 536
- ✝ "Christ Be My Leader," *LSB* 861

## The Sermon

The sermon shows the centrality of God's Word in the worship of the Church. One author writes, *"The preacher speaks for God, from the scriptures, by the authority of the church, to the people"*\*

### For God

The preacher who speaks faithfully the intent and the meaning of God's Word is speaking for God. The preacher's words should not be viewed as mere opinion or subjective thoughts of some man, but as the voice of God declaring His truth to the world. The pastor is not standing in the pulpit because of his own initiative but by the command and calling of God, "And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:15)

### From the Scriptures

Historically, the sermon expounds on a portion of the Scripture read as the lesson for the day. The New Testament shows Jesus as a textual preacher when He read the assigned reading for the day and then preached on the text (see Luke 4:16-22).

### By the Authority of the Church

The call from the congregation to the pastor gives the pastor the duty to proclaim God's Word; the authority to guide the people in the right paths of God's will through preaching and teaching.

### To the People

A good sermon will speak to real life problems of sin and sorrow from which the people in the pew suffer. God's law will be proclaimed and



applied in order to confront sins committed, and God's Gospel will be proclaimed and applied in order to soothe aching consciences and give assurance of God's enduring love.

### ***"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John 1:14***

The proclamation of God's Word is a means of grace, that is, God's grace is given to the believer through His Word. A sermon therefore is Christ-centered and not just moral instruction or encouragement. The one thing setting a sermon apart from any other kind of speech is its preaching of Christ. While law is mentioned—and necessary—in every sermon, the heart of the Christian sermon is not ultimately proclamation of law. Any law which is proclaimed is *always* answered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He alone is the focal point of all proclamation of God's love. As Christ is proclaimed and His Word is heard, He enters the hearts of His people and blesses them with faith and new life in Him.

### ***Sermon as Bridge to the Sacrament of the Altar***

Another important purpose of the sermon is seen in its location in the Divine Service. The sermon is the high point of the "Service of the Word" and leads into the "Service of Holy Communion." This is an important bridge connecting the proclamation of the Gospel to the reception of Christ's body and blood for our forgiveness. Through the sermon the preacher prepares God's people in the sermon to rightly receive the body and blood of Christ and to feed on the forgiveness of sins which the Savior offers.

### **For Your Devotions This Week...**

Review the Third Commandment and The Office of the Keys. Consider your own pastor in the words of the Third Commandment and his office as pastor in your midst. Pray for him that times of refreshing come when "dry spells" hit. Compliment him when his proclamation of Law and Gospel "hit home", convicting you and comforting you. Hymns to reflect on: "Speak, O Lord, Your Servant Listens," *LSB* 589, "Preach You the Word," *LSB* 586

\* White, James F. *Introduction to Christian Worship*, p. 138.

## The Creeds

The Church historically has confessed—and continues to *confess*—three creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian. Use of these creeds dates back to the early centuries after Christ.



### **The Apostles' Creed**

This creed is called “the Apostles’ Creed,” not because the twelve apostles wrote it, but because it reflects the sum of their Scriptural teaching. Dating from perhaps as early as A.D. 150, this creed most likely arose from an early form of pre-baptismal questioning. People wishing to be baptized in the early Church were asked, “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?” Answer: “I believe.” “Do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose...” Answer: “I believe.” This question-and-answer format continued the remainder of the Creed.

By the third century a number of churches used these baptismal questions to frame and form the basis of a corporate confession of faith. No longer used as questions, these paragraphs of confession became declarations. These declarations are the ancestors of the modern Apostles’ Creed.

This creed is most appropriate at services in which people are baptized, baptismal blessings are remembered and non-communion services.

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### **The Nicene Creed**

The basic form of the Nicene Creed was written in A.D. 325 by a church council meeting in the city of Nicea. The main reason for this council and for the writing of this creed was to combat the false doctrine of Arianism. The Arians taught Jesus was not true God, questioning the divinity and the eternal existence of Jesus Christ. The Nicene Creed was written to affirm and teach the divinity of Christ, and hence, the greater expanded second article on the Son of God.

Today our churches continue the established practice of confessing the Nicene Creed on Sundays and other occasions when the Lord’s Supper is celebrated. Because of its great focus on the person of Jesus Christ, His humanity and divinity, the Nicene Creed is especially appropriate for communion services.

### **The Athanasian Creed**

The first forms of the Athanasian Creed appeared in southern Gaul about A.D. 500. No one—then or now—knows who the author of the creed was, but because it was such a strong defense of Christ’s divinity, the creed came to be contributed to Athanasius, even though history has clearly shown he did not write this creed. Athanasius was a bishop in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, from A.D. 328-373. He distinguished himself as a great defender of the faith against the heresy of Arianism and was present at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 during which what has now become the Nicene Creed was drafted. The Athanasian Creed is also known as the *Quicumque Vult*, taken from the opening statement in Latin “Whoever will be saved...” The Athanasian Creed is traditionally confessed on Trinity Sunday due to its masterful wording which describes the relationship between the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **For Your Devotions This Week...**

For your devotions read from *Luther’s Small Catechism* the section on “The Creed”, which is also located in the front of *LSB*, pp. 322-323. In what ways do the Creeds strengthen your faith and prepare you to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world?

Hymn to reflect on: “We All Believe in One True God,” *LSB* 954, 953



## The Offering and the Offertory

### **The Offering**

Now that God's people have received grace and faith from their Savior through the proclamation of His Word, they show their gratitude by giving of their first fruits to Him.

### **Christians need to give.**

The gifts offered in church are not simply charitable donations, nor are they gifts that God Himself needs. Christians give out of a spirit of thanksgiving because they know how richly God has first given to them. Christians also know that God expects them to support His work and ministry with their first fruits, giving not only of their money but also of themselves. In light of the redemptive work of Christ God's people are moved to give abundantly.

### **Not just 10%**

In the Old Testament God asked His people to tithe, that is, to give 10% of all they had to Him. In fact, one scholar has counted up all the required offerings in the Old Testament book of Leviticus and the percentage figure for giving comes to 264%! These offerings were used to support the work of the temple and its ministers.

In the New Testament God no longer asks merely 10% from His people. The attitude that once a person gives 10% to God one can use the other 90% for one's self is not found in the New Testament. Instead, an attitude of abundant, grateful, total giving is seen, as in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Christian giving in the New Testament and among the New Testament people—which includes us—is no longer governed by a law of 10%. Our *first fruits giving* comes out of thankful hearts in response to the Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave His all for us.

### **The Offertory**

The Offertory serves as a transition from the Service of the Word to the Service of the Lord's Supper. One setting of the Offertory, and perhaps the most familiar, contains the words of Psalm 51:10-12. The

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text focuses on an important Gospel proclamation. As we give our gifts to God, we do not sing a song about our great giving or ask God to notice what good things we have just done. Instead, we humbly acknowledge that every good gift comes from God Himself. "*Create in me. ...*" "*Cast me not away...*," "*Restore to me..*" and "*Uphold me...*" are all actions we pray God takes in our lives. In the grand scheme it is the greater gifts of grace and help which God gives to us that matter. It is to His work and His gracious gifts that we are drawn and these become our reason for giving and for singing.

*Lutheran Worship* Divine Service II, both First and Second Settings, (*LSB* DS Setting 1 and Setting 2) suggested two different offertories. The first, "Let the vineyards..." weaves together images of the Lord's Supper about to be celebrated and echoes the prayers just prayed (*LSB* 955). The second (and in *LSB*, the *only*) option, "What shall I render" is an almost literal singing of Psalm 116:12-14, 17-19. (See *LSB* 159 and 176.) In place of these offertories, an appropriate hymn or a psalm may be sung.

### **For Your Devotions This Week...**

For your devotions read from *Luther's Small Catechism* the Seventh Commandment and the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, which are also located in the front of *LSB*, pp. 323.

A hymn to reflect on: "Take My Life and Let It Be" *LSB* 783, 784. While singing this hymn, consider all the parts of your life which can be used for God. Is there some part of your church family that is in need of the gifts God has graciously bestowed on you?



# The Preface

## Origin

The preface can be traced back to the third century. The preface is now used throughout the Christian Church.

## Meaning

Preface means an introduction. The preface marks the introduction to the liturgy of Holy Communion. This is an introduction to that most unique and significant encounter with the Lord at His table partaking of His very body and blood.

## Purpose

The purpose of the preface is to praise God for the gift of salvation most distinctively revealed for believers in the Sacrament of the Altar. Here as we approach the Lord's Supper to individually receive this gift, what is emphasized in the corporate, united action. The unity we hold is emphasized with the plurals, "your, we, us" express this unity beautifully and they move the worshipper's and pastor to focus on the relationship they have together in Christ.

This conversation that the preface is, is taking in the very presence of God. Here we recognize even more fully this presence as the Lord's Supper is celebrated. For what is taking place, but that we are now fully within God's realm. His kingdom is worshipping with us and we with them. That is why the proper preface concludes "Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven." Here now is heaven on earth. The church militant (those on earth) joins in worship gloriously revealed here with the church triumphant, (those in heaven). Here we join with those who have gone before us in the faith to the heavenly home. Those who have died in the faith gather as the "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) to encourage us. And what do we do? We praise the God who brings about this cosmic union.

We are moved to sing, "Holy, holy, holy..." in the Sanctus (covered next). What a grand and glorious opportunity we the people of God are

given, as we are given a glimpse into heaven at this time of the "foretaste of the feast to come."

## Practice

The Proper Preface changes seasonally throughout the Church year, and on festival services. This is done to emphasize the unique aspect of Christ's earthly life revealed during that particular season of the Church year. An example of the unique aspect would be the Christmas emphasis on the incarnation, God born in human flesh. So the words of the preface say, "...in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory." Or with the season of Easter, the emphasis is logically on the resurrection and what is spoken there is "...By His death he has destroyed death, and by His rising to life again He has restored to us everlasting life." Or with All Saints festival we praise God that He has "...surrounded us with so great a cloud of witnesses" and that we await our reception "of the crown of glory." All of these prefaces end with the ascription "Therefore with angels and archangels and ALL THE COMPANY OF HEAVEN..." This ascription reminds us that here in the church, most uniquely at the altar, heaven and earth meet and the believer is awash in the Kingdom of God. Here now, things are done God's way and the believer is transformed by the renewing of his mind. (Romans 12:2) What an awesome miracle of God is accomplished! "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

## For Your Devotions This Week...

Hymns to reflect upon: Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones, *LSB* 670, The Son of God Goes Forth to War, *LSB* 661, Fight the Good Fight, *LSB* 664, Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs, *LSB* 812, I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table, *LSB* 618

From the Scriptures: Psalm 100 & 107; Hebrews 12; Revelation 7:9-17

Please Read: Christian Questions with Their Answers, pages 329 and 330 in *LSB*.



# Sanctus

## Origin

The Sanctus as a musical portion of the liturgy can be traced back to the fourth century, though some scholars suggest its use may be found even in the older Jewish worship in the temple. It is not impossible that Jesus Himself sang the words of the Sanctus as He worshipped at the temple. The Sanctus is the most ancient, celebrated and universal of Christian hymns.

## Meaning

“Sanctus” is Latin for “holy,” the first words of this musical phrase. These words are taken from Isaiah 6:3 and are spoken by the angels who surround the throne of God in heaven.

In the text of the Sanctus the phrase “Lord God of Sabaoth,” appears. The word ‘Sabaoth’ is not a new way of saying Sabbath.--The word Sabaoth is the Hebrew word for “hosts” or “armies”.

The second half of the Sanctus also known as The Benedictus starts out “blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” These words are from Psalm 118:26 and are the familiar words of the people who met Jesus on Palm Sunday, the day He entered Jerusalem to be crucified.

The word “Hosanna” is a triumphant acclaim from the Hebrew, having the understanding “save now, I beseech Thee.”



## Purpose

The Sanctus moves us to recall where we are which is in the presence of the Holy One, the One who could command the Angelic Hosts to come and destroy. Instead He comes again in the name of the Lord in order to bless his people. The Sanctus reminds us that He, God, is totally separate and distinct from us, yet in the Sacrament which we are preparing to receive, He comes to us and draws us to Himself. Here the power of God’s Word prepares our hearts for the reception of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament. Our voices join with the angelic voices praising God for His glory and might. Then we join in welcoming the Christ who we will receive in the mystery of the Holy Sacrament.

## Practice

The Sanctus is generally set before the consecration of the elements. But it can also be placed following the consecration (as in Divine Service, Setting Five). If the Sanctus is used after the consecration, Dr. Martin Luther directs that the consecrated sacrament be lifted up by the celebrant at the time of the Benedictus.

## For Your Devotions This Week...

How does the Sanctus express our desire for what we are about to receive from the hand of God?

Hymns to reflect upon:

- ✠ “Holy, Holy, Holy,” *LSB* 507,
- ✠ “Isaiah, Mighty Seer,” *LSB* 960,
- ✠ “Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee,” *LSB* 632,
- ✠ “Glory Be to Jesus,” *LSB* 433.

From the Scriptures: Isaiah 6:1-8; John 12:12-19; Revelation 7:9-17.

Please read: the Third Article of the Creed, pages 323 in *LSB*.

# The Prayer of Thanksgiving

## Origin

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is a recent development in the liturgy. The prayer in *LSB* Divine Service, Setting One and Setting Two (a combination of that found in *LW* Divine Service I and Divine Service II) is an adaptation from the Swedish *Kyrko-Handboken* of 1942. In the early centuries the prayers offered at this point in the service were Eucharistic Prayers.

The Eucharistic prayers were removed by Luther and the reformers because they introduced ideas contrary to the Gospel. Often the Eucharistic prayers gave the wrong focus implying that since we have prayed, the consecration, Christ sacramentally joining Himself to the elements; has already taken place. Or the prayer included petitions for those living and dead saints. In essence the focus was taken away from the Sacrament and put on the works of people as overcoming sin. Because of the inherent works-righteousness of these prayers Luther omitted them.

The prayers of *LSB* clearly distinguish our words from Jesus' Words, clearly showing the difference between our prayer to God and God's Gospel proclamation in the Words of Institution.

## Meaning

The meaning behind this prayer is the focus on "the only-begotten" who came "into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior".

## Purpose

In the Prayer of Thanksgiving the focus is on the Savior, the Savior whose body and blood we will receive in the Sacrament. We give thanks for the redemption that comes to us from Jesus Christ. Here is an act of self-dedication, which we can now do as the Word of God has worked it. The presence of the Holy Spirit, whose name we invoke in this prayer, assures us in our hearts of a worthy reception of the Sacrament and a renewed consecration of ourselves to God's will and service.

What we pray for in this prayer is delivered to us in the Sacrament we are about to receive. There we receive the body and blood which gives us life, forgives our sins, and redeems us from the pit of hell.

## For Your Devotions This Week...

Think about how this prayer leads you into the Sacrament of the Altar.

Hymns to reflect upon:

- ✠ "Praise and Thanksgiving," *LSB* 789
- ✠ "Come Ye Thankful People Come," *LSB* 892
- ✠ "O Lord, We Praise Thee," *LSB* 617.

From the Scriptures: John 16:5-17:25; Jude 1 7-25, Revelation 5.

Please Read: "How the Head of the Family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks", page 327-328 in *LSB*.



# The Lord's Prayer

## Origin

The Lord's Prayer comes to us from the Lord Jesus Christ who taught it to His disciples after they asked "Lord teach us to pray."

## Meaning

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:5ff and Luke 11: 1ff) is an especially clear expression of the desires we should carry to God. In this prayer Jesus teaches us to pray for all we need in this life. We need the Father to hallow His name among us, to bring His Kingdom of grace to us, to accomplish His will in our lives, to provide for our daily sustenance, to forgive us of our sins, to lead us and deliver us as we go through this world. What we recognize in this prayer is that God is the doer and we are the receiver of His gifts.

## Purpose

This prayer puts us in mind of the Lord who has called us together. Here is our prayer of sonship/daughtership our prayer of brotherhood, our family prayer This is a prayer of humble access, as we are drawn ever more fully to the throne of God. Expressed here are our deepest needs and the fundamental needs of humanity. Where these answers are clearly displayed for us and received by us is in the Sacrament of Holy Communion to which this prayer leads us. There our deepest hunger is satisfied.

## Practice

The Lord's prayer is prayed just prior to communion, as the richness of Christ's goodness which we are about to receive in His body and blood is that upon which we focus. The petitions in this prayer lead us to seek God's hand of blessing and to find that in His Word and Sacrament. The petitions "our daily bread" and "forgive us our trespasses" are connected at the table of our Lord. From Ancient times (3rd century or earlier) the people of God have recognized the connection between the Words "daily bread" and the Lord's Supper as John 6 is recalled - "for the bread of God is he who comes down from

heaven ... I am the bread of life." Martin Luther commented, the main focus of this petition is on the person of Christ who is the true heavenly bread. Forgiveness which is not achieved in prayer, comes to us in the body and blood where the Lord is the active agent, doing His work.

## Final Note

The doxology "For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever" is a liturgical interpolation. Our text of the Lord's Prayer follows the ancient liturgical and popular use rather than any single translation of the Scriptures as a whole. (1)

## For Your Devotions This Week...

Hymns to reflect on:

Hymns to reflect upon:

- ✠ "Our Father, Who from Heaven Above," *LSB* 766
- ✠ "Come, My Soul, with Every Care," *LSB* 779
- ✠ "The Will of God is Always Best," *LSB* 758

From the Scriptures: Psalms 28 & 40 & 80 & 139; Romans 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:1 2-28.

Please Read: The Lord's Prayer in Luther's Small Catechism, pages 323-325 in *LSB*.

How does the Lord's Prayer raise the needs of the Christian to God our Father in heaven? What comfort is there in addressing God as "Father"?



## The Words of Institution

The Words of Institution are also known as the “consecration.” They are spoken in response to Christ’s mandate, “This do.” These words are not to be understood as a magic formula which change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. It is not a work of man which causes Christ’s presence. Rather, Christ is present in the meal through the whole action of consecration, reception and consumption. The Words of Institution are to be spoken at every celebration of the Lord’s Supper because Christ has given them to His Church to do so.

### ***In Ancient Practice***

During certain centuries of the life of the Church the Words of Institution were whispered by the priest so that only he heard them. Since the priest was doing the work of consecration, it was wrongly thought and practiced that the learning and participation of the congregation was insignificant or unimportant. It was under the direction of Martin Luther that the Words of Institution were once again spoken aloud so the whole congregation could hear these words of our Lord and be edified by them.

The practice of kneeling to receive the body and blood of our Lord became general practice throughout the Western Christian Church sometime after the 12th century. Scripture itself is silent on the appropriate posture one takes in order to receive the Lord’s Supper but it is quite appropriate and common practice to either stand or kneel during distribution.

### ***The Importance of the Words of Institution***

Luther spoke of the Words of Institution as “*The gospel in a nutshell*” and thought of them as proclamation of the Gospel. Indeed, we hear the words from the lips of Christ Himself which say, “*This is my body... This is my blood given for you.*” These are the sweetest words our ears could hear— words of comfort and assurance that the Savior is gladly willing to give us Himself for the forgiveness of our sins. He holds nothing back from us but from His own fullness and grace offers us Himself. Christ’s Words are recorded in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34.

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## For Your Devotions This Week...

For your devotions read from *Luther’s Small Catechism* the section “The Sacrament of the Altar,” which is also located in the front of *LSB*. p. 326-327.

A hymn to sing: “I Come, O Savior, to Your Table,” *LSB* 618.

Recall the first time you received the Lord’s body and blood. To what do you most look forward at the great banquet which awaits us in heaven? Consider the life of the infant Christian Church, “*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:42-47). How important is the study of Scripture—the apostles’ teaching—in your church family? In what ways do the brothers and sisters in Christ devote themselves to fellowship in your church family? The early Christians devoted themselves to “the breaking of bread”—their way of speaking of the Lord’s Supper. How “often” is “often enough” to celebrate the Lord’s body and blood on the Lord’s Day? Finally, the early Christians devoted themselves to the prayers (mistranslated in some translations as simply “prayer”). This is the descriptive phrase of the formal

worship life of the early Christian Church with specific prayers, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. In what ways do the “apostles’ teaching,” the “fellowship” and “the breaking of bread” feed, nourish and strengthen your church family’s prayer and worship life?



## The Pax Domini

“The Peace of the Lord”—these words (which in Latin read “**Pax Domini**”) are a remnant of two much older observances. The first was a blessing offered by the pastor to the congregation just prior to the communing of the people. This helped emphasize that in Christ’s body and blood peace is received by the people. In one way, the Lord’s body and blood is “edible peace.” The peace announced by the angels at the birth of Christ—“Peace on earth and goodwill to all men”—this peace is finally realized among God’s people still on earth by being given the same body and the same blood born in Bethlehem.

### Origin

Following the speaking of these words of peace the ancient Church would dismiss the catechumens (those still being instructed in the faith and not yet ready to receive the sacrament). From this practice comes the term “closed” or “close” communion, in short describing the action of the doors being closed behind those leaving the worship assembly.

The second observance of the peace was “the kiss of peace.” This practice involved the congregation members actually kissing the people next to them as an outward sign of forgiveness and brotherly and sisterly love which was theirs in Christ Jesus. Separation of gender in the worship assembly protected against confusion in the exchange of this sign of peace. The kiss of peace is known to have been practiced in apostolic times. Paul refers to the kiss of peace four times (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). This practice continued until about the thirteenth century.

In current American culture congregations which “share the peace” do so in the form of a smile, a handshake or even a hug, accompanied by such words as “Peace be with you,” “God’s peace to you” or “The peace of Christ be with you.”

### The Importance of the Pax Domini

Luther taught that The Peace is a form of absolution. He wrote, “*it is the voice of the Gospel announcing the forgiveness of sins, the only*

*and most worthy preparation for the Lord’s table.*

In our day this still holds true. True peace is found for us in Christ Jesus whose body and blood are given for us. He secures that peace eternally. We respond with “Amen.” “Yes, Lord, is shall be so.”

### For Your Devotions This Week...

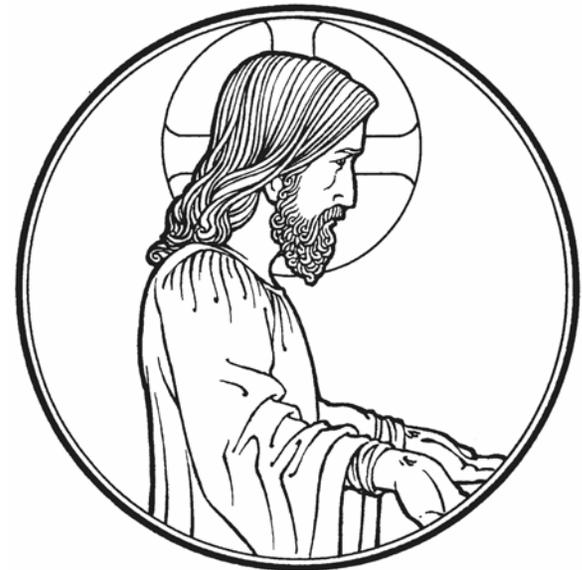
For your devotions read from *Luther’s Small Catechism* the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer through the Conclusion, which is also located in the front of *LSB*, p. 324.

Hymns to reflect upon:

✠ “O Lord, We Praise Thee” *LSB* 617

✠ “O God of Love, O King of Peace” *LSB* 751.

Consider how what is prayed in the latter part of the Lord’s Prayer comes true in the peace Christ gives through His means of grace, especially the Lord’s Supper. Think about the times and places where God has established peace in your life. To what do you look most forward in heaven and the peace which is to be found there?



## The Agnus Dei

“Agnus Dei” is Latin for “Lamb of God.” Originally these words were the first words of a hymn. Martin Luther added “O Christ” at the beginning of each of the three lines on or before 1528 so that they “O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.”

### Origin

The Agnus Dei was originally a communion hymn sung during the “Fraction” (the breaking of the bread into small pieces by the pastor after the speaking of the words of institution). The song was introduced into the Divine Service around A.D. 700. The words “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” would be sung over and over until the loaf of bread was broken into as many pieces as needed for the day’s communion. By the ninth and tenth centuries the practice of the “Fraction” was in decline and the singing of the hymn occurred more often during the distribution.

### The importance of the Agnus Dei

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” was spoken by John the Baptist to Christ as both an announcement of fact and as a greeting. These words are a confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. These words draw us to our Savior who is present in flesh and blood in His Supper. The words of John the Baptist confess the physical presence of Jesus before us and it is He and He alone who takes our sins away through His body and blood. The Agnus Dei becomes both a confession and a declaration of the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper and His forgiving power given us. Due to the strong confession of the Real Presence in its words, the Agnus Dei has not been a historic part of Reformed liturgies due to the fact the Reformed deny the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Until recent times one would not hear the Agnus Dei sung except in Lutheran and Roman Catholic liturgies.

## For Your Devotions This Week...

For your devotions read from *Luther’s Small Catechism* the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed, which is also located in the front of *LSB*, p. 322-323.

A hymn to sing: “Lamb of God, Pure and Holy” *LSB* 434

Recall the times when the Agnus Dei has been particularly meaningful to you. In what ways do the words of John the Baptist give you comfort as you prepare yourself for receiving the body and blood of Christ? As a sheep in God’s flock, what assurance to you find in that Christ, too, is a lamb—THE Lamb of God?



## The Distribution

The point when the people receive the body and blood of Christ is the high point of the Divine Service. At that moment the worshippers on earth are united to the heaven and all the saints who feast at the heavenly banquet meal. Christ Himself and all that He offers is given. Sins are forgiven. Faith is strengthened. The Holy Spirit restores holiness and gives power to resist sin and live holier lives.

Here more than anywhere else Christians learn of the incarnation of God in the *flesh*. Jesus not a mysterious, unapproachable God who remains in the heavens and commands us to rise and meet Him. He is a Savior who lowers Himself to our level, so much so that we can see Him and touch Him and taste His body and blood. He is a Savior who makes Himself readily available to us in tangible, touchable ways.

## The Posture

The earliest practice of the Church seems to be that the Lord's body and blood were received while the people of God stood. Some time after the twelfth century kneeling became the common practice. Within Lutheranism today both customs are now found. Kneeling offers Christians a particularly meaningful posture of humility and reverence when receiving this most holy meal. But this is by no means the only way of communing. With the wonderful presence in the Divine Service of God's people who struggle with standing or kneeling, congregations are now beginning to rethink distribution arrangements in order to accommodate people with varying physical challenges.

## Being made part of a three-fold unity

The Lord's Supper testifies of a three-fold union: Christ united with the elements of bread and wine, Christ united with the people who rightly receive His body and blood, and the recipient united with both the fellow Christians at the Lord's Supper and also with those who have gone before them in the faith.

The most important part of the union is Christ with us as He physically touches us with grace to forgive all our sins and restores us to right

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faith and life in Him. But also important is the union of the believer with the other believers joined at the Lord's table. There more than anywhere else we are making a public statement that we all share the same faith given by Christ (as summarized by the faith as articulated in the Creeds, not just limited to the sole teaching about the Lord's Supper).

***“For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all/partake of that one bread”*** (1 Corinthians 10:17)

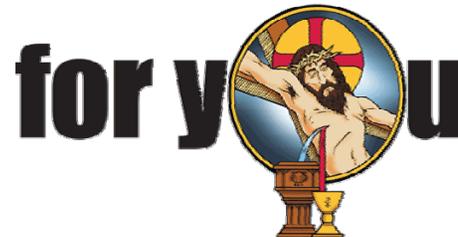
When those of different confessions *of* faith commune together, a false and unbiblical witness is given that unity of faith exists when in reality it does not. The biblical, early Christian and historical practice of close(d) communion is the only practice which truly witnesses to the profound unity of Christ in us and also we being united in one faith and mind in Him.

## For Your Devotions This Week...

For your devotions read from *Luther's Small Catechism* the section “Christian Questions with Their Answers: Drawn Up by Dr. Martin Luther for Those Who Intend to God to the Sacrament,” which is also located in the front of *LSB*, p. 329-330.

A hymn to reflect upon: “Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord” *LSB* 637.

What do you find most distracting during distribution? What do you find most helpful in preparation for receiving the Lord's body and blood? Recall hymns and songs which are particularly meaningful to you as you prepare yourself, receive and bask in the afterglow of receiving the Christ flesh and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. Read and pray Psalm 34 in light of the gift Jesus Christ gives to you in His Supper.



## Departure Hymn

Even though it is perhaps more fitting to conclude the Divine Service with the Benediction—Aaron’s Old Testament words ringing in our ears and sending us our way—many congregations sing a final hymn. “Our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. Faith that is born from what is heard acknowledges the gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise. Music is drawn into this thankfulness and praise, enlarging and elevating the adoration of our gracious giver God.... The rhythm of our worship is from Him to us, and then from us back to Him.” (from the Introduction to Lutheran Worship, p. 6).

In the rhythm of the Divine Service, God has had the last say, His word of blessing, His benediction upon us. Yet, it is difficult to listen and respond one more time in thanksgiving, reflection, and praise all that we have heard, seen, tasted, learned. Since Lutherans love to sing, we say back to God in song one more time what He has already said to us.

Consider the words of both the Benediction and Psalm 61, an Old Testament song which certainly sings back to God what He has already said in blessing:

*The Lord bless you and keep you.*

*The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.*

*The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.*

Numbers 6:24-26

*May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make His face shine upon us;  
may Your ways be known on earth,  
Your salvation among all nations.*

*May the peoples praise You, O God;  
may all the peoples praise You.*

*May the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for You rule the peoples justly  
and guide the nations of the earth.*

[wy.lcms.org/LHP](http://wy.lcms.org/LHP)

*May the peoples praise You, O God;  
may all the peoples praise You.*

*Then the land will yield its harvest,  
and God, our God, will bless us.  
God will bless us,  
and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.*

## For Your Devotions This Week...

For your devotions read from *Luther’s Small Catechism* the Fourth Commandment through the Close of the Commandments, which is also located in the front of *LSB*, p. 322.

Hymns to reflect on:

✠ “Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain” *LSB* 865

✠ “Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go” *LSB* 854

Martin Luther instructs at the conclusion of the Morning Prayer to be taught by the head of the family to the household, “*Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.*” What kind of hymn do you find most meaningful as you leave worship? A mission hymn, a hymn of thanksgiving, a hymn of praise, a hymn of prayer? Strengthened by the forgiveness of sins, the Word of God, the body and blood of the Lord, may you find yourself prepared for another week of opportunities do seek and do God’s will!

