



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 16, 2024



A Top-Down Faith

From the Tiniest Seed Grows the Largest Kingdom

We need God to give us the top-down faith that grasps the fact that kingdom of God advances in ways that are imperceptible. Through something that seems insignificant to most – the gospel – the King of kings establishes his reign in human hearts. Even Jesus himself compared the gospel to a tiny seed. Yet within a seed is hidden life. As the seed of the gospel is planted, the largest of all kingdoms grows.

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 Reading²

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Do you think it an impossible thing that God could make much of what appears to be nothing? He set the paradigm in his own Son. There is that baby in Bethlehem. There is that dying criminal on the cross. Nothing in the eyes of the world and less than nothing, he reigns from the tree. Yet all who have real life and life eternal find their refuge, their nourishment, their beauty, their life, their all, in none other.

Second Reading²

Colossians 1:3-8

It is not as though the visible and the transitory have no importance at all. It is rather in what respect they are important: Our use of the little time we have and the passing things lent to us is important as the evidence of the hidden reality of who we are and where we are going. So then, who speaks about your congregation or about you in the ways Paul describes in this reading? Is the invisible faith separated from the visible life? The power of the Word is hidden, mysterious, secret. But its fruits should not be. It is only because of that hope hidden and given in the gospel that we see all things visible, not as ends in themselves, but as means, as tools for expressing outwardly the faith that is hidden within. Don’t use the excuse that hypocrites too can do the outward works; that’s not a reason for us to do nothing, or to so hide our faith so that no one will ever see it in action.

Gospel²

Mark 4:26-34

The field of the city, the small acre of the individual soul, both are brown and dead until the seed is scattered on it. What a waste of time it seems to be! And yet, hidden within the seed is life. It sprouts. It grows. It even becomes a planting of the Lord that is a haven for those who do not have the seed, at least not yet. So again the question begs to be asked: Where are you in this barren field, and where are you as a parched acre on that field? Has the seed taken root? Has it triumphed over obstacles and sprouted? Is it still very young and tender? Is it finally useful in service? Every time you see a plant growing, be reminded of questions like these.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 1 A “Blessed Are They”

The Church sings Psalm 1 in services that emphasize the benefits of meditation on the law of the Lord. The Word of God causes us to flourish and bear good fruit, especially love for God that flows into love for human beings.

Gospel Acclamation 2 Peter 3:18

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Holy Spirit, help us to receive it with joy and bring forth fruits in faith, hope, and love; 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 859 “Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure” (David W. Rogner, b. 1960)

Church Year Season¹ Season after Pentecost

After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to grow the faith of believers. The appointed lessons cover a great body of doctrine for faith and life.

Colors & Symbolism Green

Green is the color of life, refreshment, growth, and regeneration. Whereas the first half of the Church Year (the “Festival Half” or the “Half Year of Our Lord”) focused on the life of Christ during his earthly ministry, the emphasis for the second half (the “Non-Festival half” or the “Half Year of the Church”) shifts to the result of Christ’s work through the Word: the work of defining and creating faith, and inspiring its fruits. The theme of the Christian’s growth in faith (like healthy green plants) fills the season.

Nain Paraments Sundays after Pentecost

Superfrontal: When Isaiah was called to be a prophet of the LORD, two seraphs (a class of angels) appeared and called out to one another, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3). The threefold repetition of the divine adjective emphasizes the infinite holiness of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some congregations count the Sundays in this season of the Church Year as the Sundays after the festival of the Holy Trinity, calling it the “Trinity season,” or the “Sundays after Trinity.” That is why most paraments for this season feature symbols of the Holy Trinity.

Lectern antependium: The equilateral triangle is one of the oldest emblems of the Holy Trinity. The three equal sides and angles represent the equality, unity, and co-eternal nature of the three persons of the Trinity. Though they are three distinct persons, they are of one essence as one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three interwoven circles represent the three members of the Trinity and emphasize their unity and eternal nature; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are without beginning or end.

Pulpit antependium: At each point of the triangle (the significance of the triangle is explained above) is a nimbus, Latin for *cloud*. The nimbus appears as a circle, or a halo. In Christian artwork, nimbi surround the head of the Father (when he is depicted as a human), Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit (when he is depicted as a dove) to signify their glory and holiness. In artistic depictions of believers (saints), nimbi are placed around their heads to show that they have been made holy by God’s grace in Christ and through faith. The three fish in between the nimbi and that meet in the middle of the triangle signify Christians who are united to the Triune God by faith. Fish have come to represent the followers of Jesus because believers have been brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19).

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.

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

. Clipart courtesy of “Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas”