



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 6, 2024



The Need for Followership

Followers of Christ Know How to Love Their Families

In our families, it is not enough to have the world's version of "love." We need God's love. We need to love in the way God calls us to love so we are a blessing to those we claim to love. In Jesus we see perfect, self-sacrificial love. Jesus loves us, the sinners that we are. He also loved us too much to leave us as we are. So, in love he gave his life up so that we might be holy and blameless. His love for us shapes the way we love our spouse, our children, our parents. Today we see that followers of Christ know how to love their family.

First Reading²

Genesis 2:18-24

Note how careful God is in his institution of marriage and how eager he is that husband and wife see each other as a special blessing from God. He does not give Adam a wife until Adam first recognizes his need for one. Then he takes the greatest care in providing for that need. It is even greater care than he employed when he created Adam in the first place. Then God himself, without consulting either Adam or Eve, regulates the marriage he himself has instituted in a way that will best serve the interests of the married and ultimately of the Church and society as well. Adam got the point and spoke the first humanly authored love poem addressed chiefly in praise of God.

Second Reading²

Ephesians 5:18b – 6:4

Christ himself sets the example in his marriage to us. He did everything he did not for his own benefit but for ours. We, as the bride of Christ, gladly submit to such a head, not least in the way we conduct ourselves in our family life. May the head of the family ever see it as his goal and role to do all for the benefit of those Christ has given him in his household, that the family may become a worthy reflection of the love of Christ for the Church and hers for him. Notice, by the way, that there is not word in the reading to suggest that when the husband fails to imitate Christ, the wife has an excuse to fail in her imitation of the Church. Nor is there a hint of a suggestion that the husband has a reason not to act like Christ when his wife fails to submit as willingly and eagerly as does the Church. Clearly the wife has an incentive to carry out her role that her husband may the more easily carry out his, and vice versa. But neither has an excuse to ignore the beautiful, the vital, the most important assignment of striving to imitate the marriage of Christ and the Church in their marriage. The washing of water by the Word makes such imitation a daily, if imperfect, possibility.

Gospel²

Mark 10:2-16

God takes marriage seriously. Each marriage should be seen by those in it as a most precious gift of God. To violate and destroy that gift is a crime of the first order that brings God's judgment on those who are responsible for breaking the mirror of his union with us in the Church. Such people do damage to their partner and to their children by hindering them in coming to the arms of Jesus by their bad example, by their destruction and despising of God's gift, and by clouding the mirror of the marriage between Christ and his Church. The Gospel is a warning not only to those who actually divorce for an unscriptural reason, but also to those whose behavior inside of marriage displays a lack of appreciation for the beautiful gift of God in one another and their children. It is also an encouragement to those who are faithful in their family to appreciate God's special blessing through their family for this life and as a mirror for the life of the family with Christ in his marriage with the Church.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 127 C

“Children Are a Heritage”

The Church sings Psalm 127 in services that celebrate the blessings of family. The benefits of community and family are gifts from God rather than fruits of human labor. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 127 is a teaching psalm. It instructs us that order in our governments and households is simply a gift of God from his hand alone. Wherever he does not give peace and good government, no kind of good ideas, formats, effort, or even force can keep the peace. Wherever he does not give good fortune to spouses, children, or workers, no kind of care or work can be of benefit.”

Gospel Acclamation

Ephesians 5:2

“Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Prayer of the Day

Loving God and Father, the blessings of marriage and family come from your gracious pleasure and careful design. Lead all who value these gifts to follow your path of wisdom so that they may enjoy the fullness of your 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

760 “Oh, Blest the House” (Christoph C.L. von Pfeil, 1712-1784)

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.

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