



# ABOUT THE PROPER

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## Epiphany of Our Lord

January 6, 2025



The Gift of God

The Gift of God Is for All People

On Christmas Eve the angel told the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people” (Luke 2:10). One wonders if those words struck those Jewish shepherds as odd. For centuries, God had given special attention to one nation – Israel. There were Jewish religious leaders who taught that only members of that chosen nation would be saved. Not according to the Christmas angel! The birth of the Savior was good news *for all people*.

Today we celebrate the Festival of Epiphany. Epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning “reveal.” When the Savior was born, he was first revealed to Israelites: the shepherds, Simeon, Anna. But today, we see the Lord miraculously guides foreigners across countless miles so the Savior could be revealed to them as well. How did the magi respond? “They rejoiced with overwhelming joy” (Matthew 2:10).

The Festival of Epiphany is sometimes known as “The Gentiles’ Christmas.” We Gentiles (non-Jews) rejoice in the good news that this baby is not just a gift for the physical descendants of the Israelites. He is a gift for all people – the Savior of the world.

### **First Reading**<sup>3</sup>                      1 Kings 10:1-9

The Queen of Sheba arrives with opulence in her train, but a seeking in her heart. In the court of Solomon she sees the faithfulness of the God of Israel. Her joy is evident as she offers praise to the eternal Lord. She typifies all the Gentiles nations who would hear of the mystery of Christ and come to the brightness of his dawn.

### **Second Reading**                      Acts 13:46-49

The focus of St. Paul’s ministry would be to share the gift of eternal life with the Gentiles.

### **Gospel**<sup>3</sup>                                      Matthew 2:1-12

So long on the outside, looking in, the nations of the earth had viewed the glory of the Lord with a sense of mystery and awe while all but a faithful few in the chosen nation of Israel forsook and dishonored the God of the covenant. Yet, in the Lord’s faithfulness, the promise is fulfilled as the Savior is born. The heralding star beckons the Magi to come and worship the King. Others wish to come for the purposes of evil. But the power of the Most High protects the Hope of Nations in his mother’s arms. We offer our best in response to the greatest treasure – salvation in Christ.

### **Psalm of the Day**<sup>4</sup>                      Psalm 72 A                      “Lord, Every Nation on Earth Will Adore You”

Recognizing the reference to kings bowing down and presenting gifts to the great King, the Church sings Psalm 72 in services that celebrate the Epiphany. The last three verses are a doxology at the conclusion of Book II of the Psalter. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 72 is prophecy. We see the glorious and beautiful reign of Christ in the entire world. In his kingdom only righteousness, freedom, and joyful consciences will flower and rule, not sin or evil consciences (as under the law). Of course, this does not happen without the cross.”

## Gospel Acclamation Matthew 2:2

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” The heralding star beckoned the Magi to the Christ Child. The wise men worshiped the young Jesus as the promised Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies that Gentiles would come to Jesus and proclaim him as Savior of the world.

## Prayer of the Day

Lord God, by the leading of a star, you once made known to the nations your one and only Son. Guide us, also, who know him now by faith to come at last to the perfect joy of your heavenly glory; 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 370 “How Lovely Shines the Morning Star” (Philipp Nicolai, 1556-1608)

Often referred to as “the queen of chorales,” this hymn was written by Philip Nicolai in 1597 during the Pestilence of the Black Plague. It became at once a favorite in Germany, was considered indispensable at weddings, was often sung around death beds, and often sounded by city chimes.

## Church Year Season <sup>1</sup> Christmas

The Christmas season celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God. The eternal Word became flesh that he might be the Christ, anointed to redeem God’s people. God had to become man to live under the law and die in our place. Christ’s birth, then, is inextricably connected to his death: Good Friday necessitated Christmas. So great is the love of God that even though our sin required such a sacrifice, the Light of the world still descended into our darkness.

## 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.

## Traditions & Customs Christmas

In addition to lighting the Christ candle at the center of the Advent wreath, decorating the church and house (including the Christmas tree), setting up the Nativity scene, engaging in charitable acts, and giving and exchanging presents. many families follow the tradition of gathering around on Christmas Eve or Day and reading the nativity story from Luke 2. Although many consider Christmas Day as the end of the Christmas season, this is not the case. Traditionally, celebrations and festivities began on Christmas Day (or Christmas Eve night) and continued throughout the Christmas season. The Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* points to this. It was the practice to give/receive a gift on each of the twelve days; although some only celebrated during the ‘Christmas Octave,’ which was the eight days from Christmas Day through New Year’s Day.

## Nain Paraments Christmas

Superfrontal: “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God with us.” This name for Jesus Christ was revealed to God’s people through Isaiah in a prophecy of the Savior’s birth (7:14). The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph in a dream that the child in the Virgin Mary’s womb would be that promised Immanuel – God who had come to be with us (Matthew 1:23) in order to save us. Sometimes the name is spelled *Emmanuel*, which is the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of the same name.

The vines next to Immanuel represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: *The Greek Cross:* distinguished by four arms of equal length.

Pulpit antependium: *The Celtic Cross:* similar to the Latin cross (†), but with a circle surrounding the center, which symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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