



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 23, 2025



Epiphany Moments

Love Your Enemies, Overcoming Evil with Good

Jesus asks us to befriend our enemies, to love those who hate us, and to repay evil with good. Worldly logic would say that is a recipe for being walked all over. Yet haven't we seen this tactic work? When we were Christ's enemies, he loved us to the point of death. He repays our daily wrongs with the daily goodness of his mercy. In doing so, he won us for himself. Here is the epiphany we badly need to have. Following the strategy Jesus lays out—loving our enemies—is not a capitulation to evil. It is a means of conquering it.

First Reading³ Genesis 45:3-15

How quick we are to withhold love when we have been wronged, clinging to anger in a pathetic attempt to make the offender suffer from our displeasure. Praise be to God such treatment is not ours in Christ. Joseph was sold by his brothers, imprisoned, forgotten. Yet he reflected the love of the Lord by revealing himself to his brothers, bringing them to repentance, and providing for their needs.

Second Reading³ Romans 12:14-21

Now that blessing and cursing has been established as the work of the Lord (last Sunday's lessons) it is not ours to play God. Yet the believer is compelled to show goodness to all as goodness has been shown to us. Evil will thus continue to be overcome with good, just as all evil has been overcome by the perfect goodness of the Christ.

Gospel³ Luke 6:27-38

After preaching of blessings and woes to the human heart, Jesus continues by contrasting human love and action with his own selfless love. The Christ-imitating Golden Rule finds no greater, no more challenging application than this: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 103 A "The LORD Is Kind and Merciful"

The Church sings Psalm 103 in services that emphasize Jesus forgiving our sins and giving us confidence and strength against the devil and the world. It begins in the same way as Psalm 104, and the two of them are among the most comforting psalms in the Psalter. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 103 is a psalm of thanks. Lovely and finely crafted, it thanks God for all his goodness. He forgives our sins, provides us healthy bodies and souls, satisfies us with all sorts of good things, makes us joyful and confident, and delivers us from enemies and woes. This all happens through Christ, who was promised for just this reason, and has now arrived."

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 5:44,45

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Jesus himself prayed for his enemies who crucified him. He most certainly was his Father's Son. Now God calls us, his sons, to live like Jesus and love people as perfectly as the Father does.

Prayer of the Day

Heavenly Father, keep your family continually in true faith, so that those who rely only on the hope of your heavenly grace may be protected by your mighty power; 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

729 “Son of God, Eternal Savior” (Somerset T. C. Lowry, 1855-1932)

Church Year Season ¹

Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

Colors & Symbolism

Green

Green is the color of vegetation; therefore it symbolizes life. It represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord’s ministry.

Minor Festivals

St. Matthias, Apostle (February 24)

Matthias was the one chosen by lot to take the place among the apostles of Judas Iscariot, Christ’s betrayer. The Apostles proposed two men to join them: Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. The eleven prayed and cast lots, entrusting the decision to the Lord, and Matthias became one of the Twelve (Acts 1:12-26). Nothing is known from Scripture about his later life, although he is thought to have preached in Cappadocia. We thank God for his service as apostle to the Church.

Nain Paraments

Epiphany

Superfrontal: The Greek symbol at the center of the superfrontal is the *Chi-Rho*. Chi (X) and Rho (P) 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)..... Next to the *Chi-Rho* are the letters *Alpha* (A) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13)..... The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Chi-Rho* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5)..... The blue wave at the bottom of the symbol represents both Holy Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) and the living water of the Word of Christ (John 7:37-38). The blue wave is intertwined with a vine of thorns, reminded us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to pay the price for our sins (John 19:2;30) and that believers are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection for their forgiveness and eternal salvation (Romans 6:3-4).

Lectern antependium: The circle surrounding the center of the Latin cross (†) symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. The Greek letters ΙΧΘΥΣ (pronounced: *Ichthus*) form both the word for fish and an acronym for the phrase, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” A simple drawing of a fish was used in the ancient Church in days of persecution. It symbolized Jesus Christ and also served as a code by which Christians identified themselves to one another as Christ’s followers. It also recalls Holy Baptism and is thus a symbol of Christian regeneration (John 3:5).

Pulpit antependium: The Anchor Cross symbolizes the sure and steadfast hope Christians have in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). The two fish remind us that Christians are followers of Jesus (see the description above), those who are brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19). During Epiphany the Church celebrates the many ways that Christ made himself known as true God to the world. One of these ways was his miracles. The two fish thus also remind us of Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two small fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

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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