



# ABOUT THE PROPER

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



## Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 30, 2025



“Open Door Policies”

Grace Instead of Condemnation

We assume people get what they deserve. We assume that what goes around comes around. We assume God helps those who help themselves. Those assumptions are false. God does not operate on the principle of merit but of grace. No one is beyond the reach of God's grace. God never turns it off. At the entrance of God's open door is not a Father looking to condemn us, but a Father who has eagerly longed for our return. When we do, he takes us in his loving arms and assures us we are still his child. When the weight of our sin makes us fearful of God's condemnation, he reveals his grace yet again.

**First Reading**<sup>3</sup>                      Isaiah 12:1-6

Surely it is God who saves us. Five times the LORD, the God of free and faithful grace, is mentioned in this lesson from Isaiah. His fierce anger has turned to comfort and salvation. There is no more fear of divine retribution, but joyful singing and proclamation for he has done glorious things. The Holy One has become our salvation.

**Second Reading**<sup>3</sup>                      Romans 8:1-10

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ's life ransomed mankind because it met God's demands and set us free from the Law of sin. Now we are free to live according to the Spirit. The sinful nature wants us to live in selfishness; the Spirit sets us free to live lives of selfless service to God and neighbor. Sinners that we are, the requirements of the Law could never be fully met *by* us, but now they are fully met *in* us through the indwelling of the Spirit and Christ.

**Gospel**<sup>3</sup>                                      Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

This is the account of the prodigal, or wayward, son. Because of his sins, he could not expect any kindness from his father. Yet his father received him as a full son and rejoiced over him. This seemed wrong to the jealous brother who didn't understand the Father's joy over one sinner who repents and is saved. The greatest comfort for the repentant heart is the full and free forgiveness, the love and welcome of the Father. To the self-righteous, this seems foolish, even offensive. But for the loving Father this is cause for celebration.

**Psalm of the Day**<sup>4</sup>                      Psalm 32 A                      “I Turn to You, O LORD”

The Church sings Psalm 32 in services that proclaim forgiveness for the penitent. It is the second of the seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). In Romans 4:6-8, Paul uses the first two verses of the psalm to demonstrate that the doctrine of salvation is the same in both the Old and New Testaments. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 32 is an outstanding way to teach us what sin is, since our reason does not know what sin is, and tries to make satisfaction for sin by works. The psalm describes instead how a person is freed from sin and declared righteous before God. Here the psalmist says that even saints are sinners, and are holy or blessed only by confessing their sins to God, knowing that they are declared righteous in the sight of God only through grace, apart from any service or work. In summary, our righteousness is called our forgiveness of sins.”

**Gospel Acclamation**                      Luke 15:10

“There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, you receive us as your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge your merciful goodness, give thanks for all your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience; 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**                      578 “Chief of Sinners Though I Be” (William McComb, 1793-1873)

**Church Year Season** <sup>2</sup>                      Lent

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer, of remembrance and renewal of our baptism. God calls to mankind: Return to the Lord! The journey begins with Ash Wednesday’s warning of mortality and culminates at the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

The Church’s Lenten worship is muted and quiet. For centuries, the Church has omitted her most jubilant songs of praise during this season of repentance (e.g. the “Gloria in Excelsis,” and the use of the word “Alleluia”) to reflect the somber nature of the season. Note, however, that the Sundays are designated as Sunday in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. The Sundays themselves are not considered part of the forty days, but are islands of refreshment in our Lenten walk.

**Colors & Symbolism**                      Lent: Purple or Violet

These colors are a sign of royalty, self-discipline, sorrow and repentance. Purple also reminds us of sacrifice, not only because that colored clothing was very expensive (sacrifice of money), but also because in order to make purple clothing in ancient times, one had to dye the cloth in the blood of snails (sacrifice of life). Thus purple is a fitting color for the penitential season of Lent, during which we focus more intentionally on our sinfulness, and how our King and Savior, Jesus Christ suffered in our place and sacrificed himself on the cross to take away our sins.

**Nain Paraments**                      Lent

**Superfrontal:** The lamb at the center of the parament represents Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 3:16-17). The nimbus (halo) around its head reminds us that Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, even greater than the unblemished lambs required of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:5).

The palm branches remind us of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before he died (John 12:13). Palm branches were used in celebration of victory. Jesus entered Jerusalem to conquer sin, death, and the devil. Our crucified and risen Lord assures us in his Word that his victory is ours by faith (1 Corinthians 15:57).

[The significance of the crosses on the far left and right of the superfrontal are explained below]

**Lectern & Pulpit antependia:** The cross formed by four nails represents Jesus’ death by which he was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:33; John 20:25,27). The white sash around the arms of the cross symbolizes Jesus’ righteousness and his perfect victory over our enemies through his resurrection (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23;54-57).

<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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