



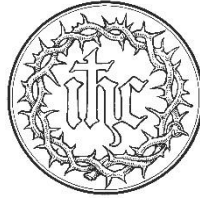
ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Good Friday

April 18, 2025



Good Friday

Darkness descended on the world that day as God draped Creation in the gloom of mourning. The Light of the world was flickering out. The great Prince of the heavenly kingdom was dying. Though guiltless, he was tortured and cursed; though innocent, he died among criminals. All of human history hinges on this day. Humbling himself before the will of the Father and the blood-thirst of men, the Son of God is slaughtered. Even worse than a shameful death, the Father must reject his own Son since he bears the sin of the world. Who could ever call this day “good?” Only those who know the truth of the cross and the new life Jesus’ death brings to believers. The horror of what our sins caused can only be overcome by the peace Jesus’ divine love has brought. “It is finished,” and eternal life is ours.

First Reading¹

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

The Messiah would come as an ordinary man—but would suffer extraordinary punishment. This Man of Sorrows had done nothing wrong. Yet when we look at what happened on Good Friday, we considered him stricken by God and afflicted. It offends our sense of justice. It makes no sense that the innocent should suffer like this. It makes no sense that the Son of God would cry that his Father had forsaken him. What punishment ever brings peace? What wounds ever bring healing? Yet, it was God’s will to crush him, because God made him to be a guilt offering—the offering God prescribed when sin needed to be atoned, and restitution was possible. On Good Friday we see the fulfillment of every guilt offering. Restitution was possible, but it would be very costly. Only one thing could restore the holiness Man had lost and pay the ransom price necessary: Christ’s holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. It is true that he deserved none of this. Yet—in a divine and holy paradox—he did. He deserved it all. Because Christ picked up our transgressions and carried our iniquities. God laid on him the sin of the world. And so, when the Messiah hung on the cross, he suffered there as the world’s biggest sinner—as the world’s only sinner. God made the Sinless One to be sin for us, and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; by his wounds we are healed.

Second Reading³

Galatians 3:10-13

At times the rules and regulations of the law are an addictive drug to the sinful nature as it wallows in self-righteousness. At others these same rules and regulations are limitless borders on the tortured conscience that knows no righteousness. This destructive behavior leads only to complete failure and the curse of the law: eternal death. Yet, freedom from this death sentence is available to all, for Jesus became the curse itself, buying freedom to righteousness and eternal life. This freedom from the curse of the law is ours by faith, won for us through him who was “hung on a tree.”

Gospel²

John 19:17-30

It is the day of contradiction. Everything is the opposite of what it should be. Man lives. God dies. Only John and some women stand nearby, and they are of no help at all. Instead the Sufferer takes care of his friend and his mother. Soldiers, the crowd, and officials of church and state care nothing for the Sufferer. The Sufferer dies for these who caused every bit of his suffering and who on this day made it as shameful and as painful for him as they could. We dare not look. But still, we cannot look away. We are devastated and desolate at the sight of what we have done by our sins. And a wave of relief sweeps over us. Yes, a day of contradiction: we heave a sigh of relief that he whom we love suffers thus, nor would we help him, even if we could! For he suffers instead of us! He suffers for us! He brings it all to a close, our whole salvation, the redemption of sinners, when he declares in agony and in triumph: *It is finished!*

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 22 A

“O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”

The Church sings Psalm 22 in services that commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus. It is quoted frequently in the New Testament, including from the lips of the Savior when he suffered for us on the cross. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 22 is a prophecy of the suffering and resurrection of Christ. Above all other Scripture it clearly points out that Christ’s torment on the cross (both inner and outer). Nowhere in other prophets does a person find such similar things so clearly, and it is indeed one of the chief psalms, since it presents the gospel message for the entire world to hear and believe.”

Prayer of the Day

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this, your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

422 “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” (Paul Gerhardt, 1607-76)

Church Year Season²

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

Black

Black is the absence of color. It symbolizes mourning, sin, death – especially Jesus’ death on the cross wherein he suffered the wrath of God against sin for all mankind.

Nain Paraments

Good Friday

Lectern & Pulpit antependia: The Cross is the most recognizable symbol for Jesus, his Church, his sacrificial death, and his victory over sin and death. The apostle St. Paul used the image of the cross as a way to sum up the Gospel of God’s saving work through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 6:14). On the cross, God’s Son suffered and died to pay for the sins of the world. By God’s grace and through faith, we are cleansed by Christ’s blood (Hebrews 10:10).

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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