



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Resurrection of Our Lord

Easter Dawn

April 20, 2025



“Because He Lives”

We Have a Whole New Identity

In the darkness before dawn, the women walked to the tomb with heavy hearts. Jesus was dead. His mission was over. In their mind, they were feeble followers of a failure. All that was left to do was finish embalming the corpse and then try to move on. Yet, Jesus wasn't dead. And because he lived, they were not followers of a failure at all. They were disciples of the one who had conquered sin and defeated death. It is as simple as this. Because he lives, we have a whole new identity: not sinners, but redeemed saints; not rebels, but God's chosen nation; not doomed, but saved; not only servants, but sons and daughters of God Almighty; not losers, but victorious, because Christ gives us the victory. The living Lord has given us a whole new identity. It is all because of him. It is all because he lives.

First Reading³

Exodus 15:1-11

The song of Moses and the Israelites foreshadows our song of joy on this day. The evil foe sought to pull us back into the slavery of sin. Yet the hand of the Lord has saved his people. Just as he rescued the Israelites through the waters of the Red Seas, so he has rescued us from sin and death through water and the Word. He has connected to the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of his one and only Son through the waters of baptism.

Second Reading¹

Colossians 3:1-4

Through baptism, God kills our sinful nature and raises a new man to life within us. The power of baptism comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So Christ's Easter is really our Easter, too. Our spiritual resurrection creates a new reality for us who are bound for glory. Though eternal life is ours through baptism, its full glory remains hidden until the day of Christ. Until then, we live as resurrected heirs waiting for our inheritance. We set our hearts and minds on the glory that is waiting for us above.

Gospel¹

John 20:1-18

After Good Friday, Jesus' followers were quick to believe all he had said about his crucifixion, but slow to believe any of his promises of the resurrection. In the early morning hours, the women trudged toward the tomb, expecting only to find a dead man. The sight of the empty tomb made Mary Magdalene so despondent that she left before hearing the angels' message. Peter and John raced to the tomb, but left with only the stirrings of faith. Mary stayed behind at the tomb, alone with her tears and fears. What love we see in our Savior's appearance to Mary! Though risen and glorious, he does not forget a single soul, but comes to Mary to dry her tears and take away her fears. In that one word, “Mary,” every Christian hears his own name on the lips of the Savior, and in Mary's cry, “Rabboni!” we feel our own joy at the Savior who loves us like this! We do not need to cling to Jesus' feet to keep him from leaving. No, it was once for all that he died. Now he is the Living One who holds the keys of Death and Hades.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 118 A

“This Is the Day the LORD Has Made”

The Church sings Psalm 118 in services that celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Since it was the last psalm in the Passover liturgy at the time of Jesus, it might have been sung when Jesus instituted Holy Communion. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 118 is my favorite. It is a palm of thanks, and it prophesies about Christ, the rejected cornerstone. It also prophesies about Christians, who thank God daily and unceasingly for all of his kindness and goodness.”

Gospel Acclamation

1 Corinthians 15:22

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” The verse is a concise statement of Law and Gospel: all people are dead in sin due to Adam’s disobedience; but all those who believe are alive in Christ due to his resurrection. Alleluia!

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, through your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. We humbly pray that we may live before you in righteousness and purity forever; 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

443 “Awake, My Heart, with Gladness”

(Paul Gerhardt, 1607-76)

Paul Gerhardt’s beautiful Easter Sunday hymn explains the Christian’s Easter joy. After the horrendous events of Good Friday, when the foes of righteousness declared victory, Christ broke free from the grave in glorious triumph (vv1-2). Christ’s enemies cannot suppress our joy or hope because God’s Son through his resurrection has won for us eternal love and forgiveness (v3). As a result of this, we cling to Christ in faith, trusting that he will be with us even in death (v4) and will crown us with eternal glory (v5).

Church Year Season ¹

Easter

After forty days of repentance and prayer, the Church bursts forth in jubilant praise at the Resurrection of our Lord. The alleluias and glorias which were muted for Lent ring out again as the Bride of Christ welcomes her Bridegroom back from the dead. Easter is as the pinnacle of the Church Year, the oldest festival and season celebrated by the worshipping Church. For a full week-of-weeks (49 days) the Church celebrates the resurrection of Christ on the Sundays of Easter which culminate on the 50th day, Pentecost.

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

The Paschal Candle

Paschal, meaning "having to do with the Passover," is a word associated with Easter. It was at the conclusion of the Jewish Passover Festival (the "Pasch") that Jesus rose from the dead and proved himself to be the true Passover Lamb whose blood removes sin and death (Ex 12; 1 Cor 6:6-8). The candle is lit for services during Easter to symbolize that Christ is alive and lives among us. The candle is also lit for Baptisms and funerals, reminding us of our resurrection to eternal life.

Nain Paraments

Easter

Superfrontal: *Alleluia* is taken from a Hebrew word which means, “Praise the LORD.” It is a word of joy and gladness and most commonly used in the Psalms (e.g. 103). An ancient custom is to refrain from using the term during Lent in order to distinguish the penitential nature of that season from the joy and hope filled nature of the Easter season that follows. The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Alleluia* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: The doves flying in front of the cross represent purity, innocence (Matthew 10:16), as well as spiritual and eternal rest (Psalm 55:6). When the dove has an olive branch or leaf in its beak, it is a symbol of hope and peace (Genesis 8:11). Each of these blessings and more come by Jesus’ death on the cross and through the gift of faith (Galatians 1:3,4).

Pulpit antependium: The cross is formed by the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). Chi and Rho 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). The vines and vegetation branching out from the cross represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

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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