

Service of the Word

The Invocation

Matthew 28:19b

The Invocation separates the gathering of God's people from all other human gatherings. To be gathered "in the name" of the triune God clearly identifies who we are worshipping. To be gathered in His name also identifies us as one of His own. Being gathered in His sacred name calls to mind the new identity we were given at our Baptism, when we were united to the triune God and made one with Him. Because of the baptismal emphasis, the pastor stands near the baptismal font and worshipers are invited to make the sign of the cross as a visual remembrance of their baptisms.

The Confession & Absolution

1 John 1:8-9, Hebrews 10:22, Luke 18:13, John 20:19-23

We, God's people, confess the truth that we are sinners. We admit that we have offended God and because of our sinful offenses we really deserve God's present and eternal punishment. The pastor then forgives our sins in God's stead and by His command. The words of absolution are not the pastor's own opinions or pious thoughts, but God's clear words of pardon.

The Introit

Psalm verses

The Introit is the first part of the service which changes from week-to-week and, in turn, provides a glimpse into the theme of the day. The term originates from the Latin *introitus*, meaning "entrance." In the early church, a psalm was sung as the ministers processed into large worship sanctuaries. In keeping with this tradition, notice that during the Introit the pastor "enters" the chancel area as the Introit is sung. The Gloria Patri concludes the Introit, just as it concludes all psalms. By singing the Gloria Patri, it distinguishes the Christian use of the psalm and connects the Old Testament with the New Testament.

The Kyrie

Matthew 15:22, Mark 10:46-52,

Luke 17:13

"Lord, have mercy" is a translation of the Greek *Kyrie eleison* (pronounced KEE-ree-yay e-LAY-son). This prayer differs from the repentant prayer spoken in the confession of sins. Freed and absolved, we pray this prayer illustrating our utmost dependence upon God to grant the petitions for which we pray. As our Lord comes to us through His Word and Sacraments, we call on Him to show mercy - compassionate treatment - to us and, indeed, to the whole world, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

The Gloria in Excelsis

Luke 2:14, John 1:29

Part of the liturgy since the 6th Century AD, the angels sang this joyous refrain on the night of Jesus' birth. Through this ancient hymn, the Church gives praise to the triune God for sending our Lord Jesus to "take away the sin of the world." During the penitential season of Lent, the jubilant Gloria is omitted. Likewise, it is not sung during Advent as the Church waits in joyful anticipation of the news of Christ's birth at Christmas. In recent years, another historic hymn, "Worthy is Christ," based on Revelation 5 and 19, has been substituted for the Gloria in Excelsis during the Easter season. This hymn extols the work of the risen and triumphant Christ on our behalf.

The Salutation

Philemon 25, Galatians 6:18, Ruth 2:4

More than a simple greeting like "good morning," this dialogue shows the special relationship between pastor and congregation that the Lord alone brings.

The Collect

Pronounced "COLL-ect," in the early church this was a prayer which "collected" the prayers of the people. Since the Middle Ages it has been directed to the needs of all in a particular season, festival, or theme of the day. This is a prayer of the gathered body of believers in which the Pastor's voice, alone, signifies the unity of the faithful.

The Scripture Readings

References to the reading of Scripture as part of the service appear in Luke 4:16-17, Acts 13:14-15, and 1 Timothy 4:13. The readings that we use follow the calendar of the church year and are arranged in a three-year cycle. The *Gospel* lesson is the main reading for any day in the church year and sets the theme for the day. We stand for the Gospel to acknowledge Jesus' own words which are read by the pastor, an acknowledgement also realized by singing responses to the announcement of the Gospel. The *Old Testament* prepares the way for the Gospel. Parallels often exist between these two lessons. During the Pentecost and Epiphany seasons, the *Epistles* usually follow a semi-continuous reading from the letters of Paul, Peter, or John. During the other seasons of the church year and on festival days, the Epistle lessons support the theme as communicated by the other two lessons. Sometimes a *Psalm* is spoken or chanted. The Psalm is selected as a reflection upon the Old Testament.

The Creed

We profess our Christian faith by speaking together one of the three historic creeds confessed by the Christian Church. These statements express our fundamental Christian beliefs in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Fragments of the Apostles' Creed, the baptismal creed, date from A.D. 200. The Nicene Creed, used when Holy Communion is celebrated, took its final form in A.D. 381 at the Council of Constantinople. The Athanasian Creed, traditionally spoken on Trinity Sunday, originates from the late 5th century. Regardless of which creed is spoken, the Creed is the Church's word in answer to God's word, the public acceptance and confession in summary form of the faith of the whole Church.

The Hymn of the Day

This is the principal hymn of the Divine Service and is associated with the readings of the day. It often reiterates the theme of the sermon.

The Sermon

The Church gathers around Word and Sacrament: pulpit and altar. In the Sermon, just as Peter did in Acts 2:14-36, the pastor preaches and teaches. He proclaims the work of Christ and applies it to our lives. The pastor regularly chooses one of the three texts read earlier in the service as the basis for his sermon.

The Offering

1 Corinthians 16:1-4;

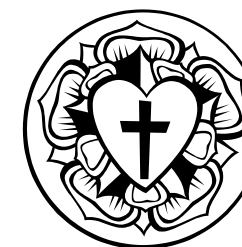
2 Corinthians 8:5-7, 9:7; 1 Chronicles 29:14

In offering money as an expression of worship, we are responding to God's claim on our lives and giving Him the best portion of what He has in fact given us. This is an act of worship. It is not done with compulsion. Rather, it is done in faith and in thankfulness of heart realizing that God will provide for our bodily needs. During this time the altar is prepared for Holy Communion. As the gifts are presented to the altar, a psalm of thanks (usually Psalm 51:10-12 or Psalm 116:12-13, 17-19) is either sung or spoken.

The Prayer of the Church

1 Timothy 2:1

Prayer is one of the most important acts of the faithful gathered in worship. Our prayers include the Holy Christian Church, our congregation, our district and the Synod, as well as those called to serve at those levels, our nation and its leaders, the nations of the world, and people in every kind of need (e.g. homeless, addicted, lonely, despairing, wavering in the faith, etc.). We pray for peaceful times, good weather, a godly society, and on and on. Through these prayers we are serving our neighbors and the whole world.



Service of the Sacrament

The Preface 2 Timothy 4:22, Colossians 3:1, Lamentations 3:41, Psalm 136

Early in the Church's celebration of the Lord's Supper these 'sentences' were attached to the Words of Institution as a preface or preparation for reception of Jesus' body and blood. Their original form has changed little over nearly 2,000 years of use. The versicles and responses invite the worshipers to prepare their hearts and to give thanks for the gracious gift our Lord gave in this sacred meal. Included in the preface is the proper preface, an expansion upon the preface which connects the Service of the Sacrament to the particular season of the church year being celebrated (i.e. Lent, Easter, etc.). The concluding words of this prayer join us with other Christians in heaven and on earth and even the very angelic host.

The Sanctus and Benedictus

Isaiah 6:3, Matthew 21:9, Psalm 118:25-26, Revelation 4:8

Latin for "Holy" and "Blessed is he..." Together, this is a grand hymn of the Service of the Sacrament, for it acknowledges a reality that our senses cannot experience, namely, that we are as near the presence of God as the angels were, as recorded in the vision of Isaiah's call (Isaiah 6:3). It is difficult to miss the obvious connection between "He who comes" and Christ's coming in His body and blood. As we join our voices to the unending hymn of praise that swirls around God's throne in heaven, we experience a reality unlike anything else in the world. This is truly heaven on earth.

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus taught His disciples this prayer and it has become the central prayer of the Christian Church. Its short and concise lines contain every subject for which we should pray. All of our needs and desires are summed up in the very prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ prayed to the Father in Heaven.

The Words of Our Lord

Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

These are the very words our Lord Jesus Christ spoke on the night that He was betrayed. His words are at the heart and core of the Sacrament. They consecrate and set apart the bread and wine for this holy meal. Jesus has charged His Church with the command to "Do this in remembrance of me." Therefore the Church is continually drawn together anew to receive His body and blood.

The Pax Domini

John 20:19

This phrase, meaning "The peace of the Lord," that the pastor chants/speaks is a public absolution of the sins of the communicants. It is the true voice of the Gospel announcing the remission of sins and therefore is the one and most worthy preparation of the Lord's Table, if faith holds to these words as coming from the mouth of Christ Himself.

The Agnus Dei

John 1:29

"Lamb of God" is the translation of this Latin title. The short hymn blends together several theological strands. Jesus, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, lays down His life on the cross to take away all sin and now here in His Supper we receive the body and blood, which grant forgiveness through this sacred eating and drinking. As we feast on the Lamb of God, we receive forgiveness, assurance, and glad confidence.

Distribution

Upon arriving at the altar to receive the Lord's body and blood, it is appropriate to bow toward the altar. This action is a way of acknowledging the Lord's presence in His body and blood in this sacred meal. The same may be done before leaving the altar. Far from being a meaningless ritual, this action is a powerful witness, as it reminds us of the miraculous gift we receive in this sacrament. Because membership in a church body is actually a confession of faith and since receiving the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of our unity in the Christian faith, members of congregations not in fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are asked to speak with the Pastor before communing.

The Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32

A unique and more recent Lutheran contribution to the Divine Service is the post-communion canticle. This post-communion canticle is also known as Simeon's Song, based on the Latin for "Now, you dismiss..." Simeon had long awaited the promised Messiah and now, after seeing the baby Jesus in the Temple, was ready to die in peace for God had proven faithful to His prophetic Word. In the same way we are now prepared to depart in the peace of God having seen Jesus proclaimed and received in the Supper as the one promised of old. An optional post-communion canticle sometimes sung, "Thank the Lord," is based on Psalm 105 and it reflects the natural response of thanksgiving after receiving the supernatural gift of God's forgiving grace in Christ.

The Post-Communion Collect

As we move toward the end of the liturgy we look back over the service and look forward to the rest of our week. Each of these prayers begins with thanksgiving for the gifts received in God's Divine Service and concludes with a prayer for God to lead us into our daily lives refreshed by His gift of forgiveness.

The Benediction

Numbers 6:24-26

God commanded Moses to commit this blessing to the use of Aaron and his sons as they carried out their priestly duties. This was to be the blessing pronounced over all the Israelites. A benediction ("blessing") has long been part of the Divine Service, but the specific use of the Aaronic blessing is distinctively Lutheran. The Christian Church, as the New Israel, is sent forth with the same promise of God's gracious presence in its life. More than just nice words to send us on our way, the Benediction actually gives us something: the Lord. Just as the name of the triune God marks us in the Invocation at the beginning of the service, so is that name given to us at the conclusion. With the name of God comes all gifts that He desires to give: blessing, protecting, grace, and peace.

Sources Used: *The Lutheran Liturgy* by Luther D. Reed (1947, Muhlenberg Press); *Hymnal Supplement '98* (1998, Concordia Publishing House); *Text, Music, Context* (2004, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod); *Gathered Guests* by Timothy Maschke (2003, Concordia Publishing House)

Members & Friends, please feel free to take this brochure with you.

A Guide to the Divine Service



Christ Lutheran Church is part of the one holy Christian and apostolic Church, a Church that spans both time and place. As such, we use an order of service which the apostolic Church has basically used since the late 5th century A.D. Through the words of the historic Divine Service, our voices join with the whole company of heaven in the singing of God's lavish love for sinners. In addition, the liturgy connects our local congregation to this larger Church.

This brief pamphlet is designed as a guide to the Divine Service, the liturgy for Holy Communion. Derived from the German term, "Gottesdienst" ("God's service"), the meaning of "Divine Service" is dual in nature. In worship, God serves us with His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. We respond in service to Him through our sacrifice of thanksgiving, praise and fervent love toward one another.

Furthermore, by singing and speaking the liturgy, we are engaged in learning about Jesus. The Lutheran Reformers highly valued this educational aspect of the historic liturgies of the Church. The words of the liturgy teach us about Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. By singing, speaking, and hearing these words over and over again the Holy Spirit works through the gospel words and strengthens our faith.

May this pamphlet give you a deeper appreciation for this historic service of the Church, which the Lord uses to convert and strengthen His people by His word, drawing us together as the Body of Christ.

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