The Invocation

Origin

The words of the Invocation—*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*—echo the mandate of Jesus spoke in in Matthew 28:19, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Purpose

The Gospel is immediately established by the Invocation. Even in the earliest days of the Old Testament, God declared, “*In every place where I record my name I will come to you, and I will bless you.*” (Exodus 20:24). God’s name establishes God’s gracious presence and where God’s grace is, there also is life and salvation.

The Invocation also points us to Baptism. With the water these words first gave us new life in our Triune God. As these words were first spoken to us in Baptism the Holy Spirit came to us and gave to us salvation.

The Invocation is, therefore, the purest Gospel reminding us of God’s saving presence among us as we worship and also within us by virtue of our Baptism.

The Invocation as it stands is an incomplete sentence. It is an “echo” through time which reminds us that it is God—and God alone—who has called order out of chaos, as we read in Scripture: “In the beginning God created . . . (Genesis 1:1),” “In the beginning was the Word . . . (John 1:1). We also learn and confess in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed that it is specifically the Third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—who “calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the Whole Christian church on earth.”

Practice

While speaking the Invocation the pastor and people may make the sign of the cross. The sign of the cross is made in remembrance of Baptism, when Christians are first marked with the cross over heads and hearts and washed in the name of the Holy Trinity. In *The Small Catechism*, Luther
recommends the sign of the cross to begin one’s prayers on arising and retiring. This physical action reminds us how God marked us as His own through the cross of Jesus.

The sign of the cross is made by holding the palm of the right hand flat, thumb and fingers together, and by touching with the tips of the fingers and forehead (“My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven”), then the breast (“and was incarnate for me”), the right shoulder (“and was crucified for me”), and finally the left shoulder (“and entered into my heart”). This is the early form. In the Latin, or Western Christian tradition, the last movement is made from left to right. While making this sign, the left may be held flat against the body a little below the breast.¹

**During the Week**

For your devotions read “The Sacrament of Holy Baptism” in *The Small Catechism*, which is also located in the *Lutheran Service Book*, 325. Include the Invocation in your daily devotions, bible study, and prayer life.

A hymn to sing: “Baptized into Your Name Most Holy” (LSB 590; TLH 298; LW 224).

See also Exodus 3:13, 14 and St. Matthew 18:20.

Note: The Invocation is part of the “Preparation” section of the Divine Service. The worship service may begin with a Hymn of Invocation which can reflect the confessional nature of this preparatory rite, the theme of the day or the time of the day (morning or evening). There may be circumstances when the preparation (Invocation, Confession and Absolution) are omitted altogether, such as when celebrating Holy Baptism.

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The Confession and Absolution

Origin

Ultimately, Confession and Absolution goes back to Scripture. Our statement of trust in God’s mercy is from Psalm 124:8, “Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Our confidence that God will grant forgiveness is from Psalm 32:5, “I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

The New Testament also gives witness to the importance of Confession and Absolution. St. John writes, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John :8-9).

Purpose

The purpose of a public confession of sins at the beginning of the service is that we be prepared to receive the grace of God mercifully given throughout the Divine Service. Gathered together by the Holy Spirit around the Name of God in the Invocation, we now humbly admit we bring nothing worthy to God for the goodness we are about to receive.

In Medieval times, this part of the service was conducted outside the nave (the main gathering worship space). The Confession and Absolution was—and still is—preparatory to the entire Divine Service. Once the people confessed their sins and received absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor, only then did thy consider themselves prepared and worthy to come into the house of God and receive the treasures of His grace. Not only actual sins are confessed, but also Original Sin. The heart and purpose of Confession and Absolution is pure Gospel. God is the giver of forgiveness; we are the recipients of this gift of God.
Practice

Confession and Absolution as a public rite and preparation for the Divine Service developed in the early Middle Ages. Originally, this type of confession was spoken by the pastor prior to the service in order to acknowledge his own unworthiness to lead worship. Gradually, it came to be spoken aloud with the congregation.

In our day, the practice of public confession puts us in mind of our deep and utter sinfulness—sinfulness which has permeated all we have wrongly thought, said, and done, and all we have not rightly thought, said and done. Put into proper perspective, we now receive the richness of Jesus’ grace and know we need not fear the judgment of God because our Savior has redeemed us from God’s wrath.

During the Week

For your devotions read the section entitled “Confession” from *The Small Catechism*, which is also located in the front of *Lutheran Service Book*, 326. Also prayerfully consider the place and practice in your personal, family, and congregational life of “The Order of the Confessional Service (TLH, 46-49), the “Service of Corporate Confession and Absolution” (LSB 290-291; LW 308-309) and “Individual Confession and Absolution” (LSB 292-293; LW, 310-311).

The Introit  
(The Propers, Part I)

Origin

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name” (Psalm 100:4), sings out the psalmist and people as they enter into the Lord’s temple. The Introit (from the Latin introitus, entrance) is a psalm or a portion of psalm which indicates the preparatory part of the service is concluded and the first part of Divine Service—the Service of the Word—is now to begin.

In the early church the Introit was chanted as the clergy entered the church and processed to the altar.

Purpose

The Introit provides a meditative step between the Confession and Absolution and receiving the blessings of God’s Word soon to be heard. The Introit still serves its original purpose in that, after we have confessed our sins and received forgiveness, we are made worthy to enter into God’s presence and receive further blessings from Him.

A typical Introit is “book-ended” by an antiphon, that is, usually one Psalm verse, perhaps a New Testament verse (as for Easter Sunday), or occasionally a short liturgical text (as for Trinity Sunday), which begins and ends the body of the Introit. Originally the antiphon was sung by the congregation as a response to each verse of the psalm or a group of verses. The antiphon along with the body of the Introit, which are both chosen to complement the theme of the day, immediately set the tone of all that is to be heard and proclaimed from God’s Word.

The Psalms—the hymnal of ancient Israel, Jesus, and the early Christian Church—are still sung and said by today’s Church—are still sung and said by today’s Church, tying together Old and New Testament believers around the Savior of whom the Psalms sing.

The *Gloria Patri* (“Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit . . .”) serves as a doxology (a word of praise) at the end of the
psalm verses, which proclaims to all that the Church sees the Psalms centered around and fulfilled by Christ Himself. The addition of the *Gloria Patri* to each of the Psalms distinguishes the Church from the Synagogue, in that we confess that the whole Psalter is about the Triune God.

**Practice**

If the Confession and Absolution part of the service is led from the entrance of the church, from the steps of the chancel or from the baptismal font, the Introit may still serve its original purpose as theme-setting “traveling” music for the pastor to move from one area of the church to another.

The Introit consists of the antiphon, the Psalm verse, and the Gloria Patri. This antiphon also expresses the chief thought of the day present throughout the Propers. Hence many Sundays in the Year are known by the first words of the Introit in Latin: *Ad Te Levavi, Invocabit*, and *Quasimodo Geniti*.

Only during Passiontide (the last two weeks of Lent) is the *Gloria Patri* omitted.

**During the Week**

For devotions: Locate the appointed Introit of the Day (which carries the congregations through the week). For example, the Introit for the First Sunday in Advent (*Ad Te Levavi*) is found in TLH, 54, or LW, 10. How does this passage summarize and support your spiritual life this week?

Review the First Table of the Law (the First through Third Commandments found in *The Small Catechism*, LSB 321). In what ways does the Introit serve the purpose of showing God to be the only God in worship, keeping His name holy and remembering His day of rest?
The Kyrie  
(The Ordinary, Part I)

Meaning
Κύριε ἑλήσον, “Kyrie, Eleison,” is Greek which means “Lord (Kyrie), have mercy (eleison).”

Origin
Early liturgies inserted a prayer of the faithful after the Introit. This prayer took the shape of a responsive prayer in the mid-fourth century. The Kyrie, over the years, has taken different forms with as many as ten versicles with response being used as a prayer asking for forgiveness. The original intent of the Kyrie was not to be penitential asking for forgiveness, but as an acclamation of the blessing the Lord will bring as we are in His presence. The Lord has come to meet His people as they begin their worship. The Kyrie resembles the Hebrew “Hosanna (save us now),” a cry for help or favor.

Purpose
The Kyrie, being the first prayer of the service carries great spiritual depth. Here in the presence of God we seek His aid and favor. Forgiveness has already been asked for and received in the confession and absolution. Now in the Kyrie we seek the Lord’s favor and blessing. The thrice uttered: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy, remembers the Triune God.

Particular to Divine Service Setting I, we ask for this not merely for ourselves, but very unselfishly we seek peace and unity in the church, the state and the world. The Kyrie is brought to a close with the great acclamation of what our Lord is accomplishing “help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.” This form of the Kyrie comes from variations in the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Divine Services.

The Kyrie raises the service to lofty levels as it expresses a cry for help in times of need. We see this theme in the Psalms: 25:16; 26:11; 15:22; St. Luke 17:12; 18:38, 39. Jesus responds to their request by restoring
them through His mighty power. It is for this reason that the *Gloria* follows the Kyrie.

Here, we are seeing help from the Lord, in whose presence we have gathered. That help will come to us as we continue in this liturgical journey and hear the Lord speak to our concerns and restore us in His power during this time of worship.

**During the Week**
Hymns to reflect on LSB 942, 852, and 607.
Please read in the Scriptures: Exodus 33:19-23; Psalm 57; Ephesians 2:1-10.
Read in Luther’s Small Catechism: The Close of the Commandments and First Article of the Creed, in LSB 332 (LW 301).
The Gloria
(The Ordinary, Part II)

Origin

The *Gloria in Excelsis* is a hymn of adoration and praise directed especially to Christ. The opening words are that of the angels in St. Luke 2. It is one of the oldest hymns of the Church. “The Gloria” was first introduced into the liturgy as a song of Thanksgiving. It’s history traces back to 530 A.D. where it was sung as part of the Christmas Eve celebration. 600 years would pass before it was given common usage in the liturgy.

Purpose

As the people of God move from the Kyrie to the Gloria, there is a noticeable change of mood. Moving from the subdued tones of the Kyrie to the Gloria for the Trinity, joy and jubilance resound. In both hymns, the work of the Trinity for our salvation is emphasized, with the central figure of this activity of God being Christ, the Lamb of God. Here, now, as we stand in the presence of the Divine, His forgiveness (the Absolution), His assured aid (Lord, have mercy) moves us to resplendent praise. We recall God’s gracious act of deliverance in Jesus Christ, wherein the people of God are saved. The Gloria adores God the Father in the words of the angels and the praise and thanksgiving of the Church. It adores the Son and also prays to the Son as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and dispenses this mercy merited by his death and resurrection. Finally it closes with a Trinitarian ascription of holiness, power and glory.

Practice

The Gloria is an ordinary of the Divine Service, that is, it like the Kyrie and Sanctus is there week in and week out in the Church year. However seasonal variation is traditional to the church.

During Advent, due to its penitential themes the Gloria is omitted. During the Gesimas (Pre-Lent), if violet is used on the altar the Gloria is
omitted, if green then the Gloria is retained. During Lent the Gloria is omitted in addition to the Alleluia.

**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect on: 948 and 947.
Please read: the Second Article of the Creed, LSB 322-323 (LW, 302).
The Salutation and Collect
(The Propers, Part II)

Origin

The Salutation is a greeting and a response. The thought behind it is akin to the Hebrew word, *Immanuel*, meaning, “God with us.” The thought behind the greeting is to unite Pastor and people. As Wilhelm Loehe writes “the bond of love between pastor and people are tied anew.”

The Salutation is to be a part of every day speech between the people of God. This greeting is seen repeatedly in the Scriptures, as it reaches back to Boaz and Ruth in Ruth 2:4. The Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon and says “the Lord is with you,” Judges 6:12. The Archangel Gabriel when he appears to Mary announces, “hail, you who are highly favored, the Lord is with you,” St. Luke 1:28, Paul in His writings uses the same thought in II Thessalonians 3:16 and II Timothy 4:22. The purpose of the Salutation is to express the certainty that since we are in the presence of God, it is His desire is to be here with us, and we are blessed by that presence.

People and pastor pray for each other, invoking the presence of the Lord Who comes to men through His Word.

The collect is a collection of the thoughts for a particular Sunday or festival and have been a part of the liturgy of the Church for nearly fifteen centuries. The collect seeks to emphasize the theme of the day, being a proper to the particular Sunday, and a particular need or desire the Church has in relation to that theme. Wilhelm Loehe spoke of the collect in this way: a collect is “the breath of a soul, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, brought to the eternal Father in the name of His Son.” The collect also serves to prepare the congregation for the reception of the readings and the sermon.

Practice

The structure of the collect is as follows:
Address: names the person of the Trinity to whom the prayer is particularly addressed.
Rationale: Notes the particular characteristic of God upon which this prayer is predicated.
Petition: States the prayer, the blessing being asked.
Benefit: Gives the goal toward which the petition is directed.
Termination: ‘who lives and reigns . . . ’, a doxology.

Collect for Palm Sunday as an example:
Address: Almighty and everlasting God,
Rationale: You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross:
Petition: Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience
Benefit: and be made partakers of His resurrection;
Termination: through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.


**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect on: 919 and 585.
From the Scriptures read: John 17; Psalm 86; Ruth 2; II Timothy 4.
Please read: The Third Article of the Creed; LSB 323; LW 301.
The Scripture Readings
(The Propers, Part III)

Origin

In the service thus far God has been introducing Himself to us and we to Him. Recognizing that we are in the presence of the Divine and Holy One, we await the message He desires to bring to us.

God brings us His glorious message through the Scripture readings. The practice of keeping a certain order to the readings for every Sunday and festival day dates back to the time of the Apostles. This continued throughout the early Church and was standardized in AD 800 by Charlemagne. Not only were readings standardized but also the Collects, Introits, Graduals, Tracts and Verses. The three great festivals: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, were the first to have specific readings designated.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognizes two Lectionaries, or orders of readings. The first is the One Year (Historic) Lectionary. This lectionary finds its roots in the early Church and Medieval Church. Luther and the Confessors used this lectionary as did most of worldwide Lutheranism until 1969. The second is the Three Year Lectionary. This was adapted from the Roman Catholic Church’s Lectionary and Church Year revisions of 1969 and is used by most Protestant churches today.

Purpose

We receive the message of our God from His divinely inspired and inerrant Word. Our God now speaks to us with a message we need to hear. That saving message does not change. It is centered in the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose for our salvation.

Practice

The general practice in the Evangelical Lutheran Church is to have an Old Testament Reading, where God is revealed as being present with His
people to reprove, direct or bless them. The Old Testament points forward to the Savior who was to come. The practice of reading a lesson from the Old Testament on Sunday is a newer one, but a good and salutary practice. The Gradual which traditionally led from the Epistle to the Gospel follows and now leads to the Epistle.

The Epistle is traditionally a letter from the Apostles. It is the Word which the Holy Spirit addresses to believers through the Apostle, and in which are set forth the faith and life which should characterize the Church. The Alleluia and Verse follows, or the Tract in Pre-Lent and Lent.

The Gospel is the pinnacle of the Service of the Word. It is the Good News proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through the Evangelist, in which the saving word and work of Christ, commemorated that day, are set forth. The versicles which surround the Gospel and the practice of standing for the Gospel in the Divine Service understand that Jesus himself is present in the midst of the congregation. He is the very Word of God, incarnate.

The Gospel procession has in recent times returned as a practice in Lutheran churches. The Gospel book or Lectionary is brought forth into the congregation often accompanied by crucifer and torchbearers. This further emphasizes that Christ has come among his people and that the Gospel is also to go forth into all the world.

**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect on: 578, 579, and 580.
From the Catechism: The First through Third Commandments, LSB 321.
The Gradual and the Verse  
(The Propers, Part IV)

Origin

The gradual is a portion of God’s word chosen for the day to emphasize and reflect a certain theme present in the Scripture readings. It is proper to each Sunday. Originally, the gradual was spalm sung by a solo cantor to which the congregation responded with a brief interjection, such as the Alleluia, or a verse from the psalm itself. This portion of a psalm receives its name from the Latin word, *gradus*, “step.” The gradual is a two verse selection from the Psalms, although sometimes it is taken from the Old Testament (Epiphany, Good Friday), the New Testament (Festivals), or Liturgical Texts (Holy Trinity).

The verse serves as yet another pause between Scripture readings, usually surrounded by Alleluias. Whereas the Gradual responds to the Old Testament reading, the Verse highlights the Gospel lesson as well as the themes for the Sunday. The verse may be from the Psalms or the New Testament, or even a Liturgical Text.

During Gesimatide and Lent the Verse is replaced by the Tract, a selection of Psalm verses which fits the Sunday.

Purpose

As they are used today, both the Gradual and the Verse still retain their original purpose. The Gradual aids the worshipper to “step” and reflect upon the Old Testament reading while moving toward the Epistle. Whether sung by a soloist, chanted by the choir or spoken, the Gradual provides movement in the worship service.

The verse anticipates the glorious presence of Christ in the Gospel reading and therefore joyfully exclaims the coming of His Word.

Practice

As reflected in *The Lutheran Hymnal* the Gradual came between the Epistle and the Gospel, since the Old Testament reading was not
standardized until shortly thereafter. Since the publication of *Service Book and Hymnal* and *Lutheran Service Book*, the Old Testament reading has returned and the Gradual then is placed between it and the Epistle. The Gradual is omitted in Eastertide since the Alleluia lengthens and takes its place. The Sequence Hymn, “Christians to the Paschal Victim” traditionally precedes the Gospel procession and reading. Other seasons can also have Sequence Hymns (Christmas, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten; Pentecost, “Veni Sancte Spiritus, etc.).

When the verse is chanted or spoken the congregation stands in reverence and respect for the Gospel about to be read. During Gesimatide and Lententide the Alleluia and Verse are “buried” until Easter and the Tract is instead chanted or read.

**During the Week**

For devotions: Review the First Table of the Law (The First, Second, and Third Commandments).

A hymn to sing: “One Thing’s Needful” (LSB 536; TLH 366; LW 277).
The Creed
(The Ordinary, Part III)

Origin

The Creed is a statement of what one believes. The word is derived from the Latin *Credo*, I believe. The Creed retains its ordinary place in the service because it is necessary to state publicly our acceptance of the truths of God’s Word. The most appropriate place for such a confession of faith is in the principal Service, the Divine Service (St. Matthew 10:32, 16:15-18; Romans 10:9).

Three Creeds are confessed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

The Apostles’ Creed

This creed is called “the Apostles’ Creed,” not because the twelve apostles wrote it, but because it reflects the sum of their Scriptural teaching. Dating from perhaps as early as A.D. 150, this creed most likely arose from an early form of pre-baptismal questioning. People wishing to be baptized in the early Church were asked, “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?” Answer: “I believe.” “Do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose ...” Answer: “I believe.” This question and answer format continued the remainder of the Creed.

By the third century a number of churches used these baptismal questions to frame and form the basis of a corporate confession of faith. No longer used as questions, these paragraphs of confession became declarations. These declarations are the ancestors of the modern Apostles’ Creed.

This creed is most appropriate at services in which people are baptized, baptismal blessing are remembered and non-communion services.

The Nicene Creed
The basic form of the Nicene Creed was written in A.D. 325 by a church council meeting in the city of Nicaea. It was completed after the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. The main reason for these councils and the writing of this creed was to combat the heresy of Arianism. The Arians taught that Jesus was not true God, questioning the divinity and eternal existence of Jesus. The Nicene Creed was written to affirm and teach the divinity of Christ, and hence, the greater expanded Second Article on the Son of God.

Today our churches continue the established practice of confessing the Nicene Creed during the Divine Service on Sundays and on other occasions when there is Divine Service. Because of its great focus on the person of Jesus Christ, His humanity and divinity, the Nicene Creed is especially appropriate for the Divine Service. Hence it has been considered Ordinary to the service.

The Athanasian Creed

The first forms of the Athanasian Creed appeared in southern Gaul about A.D. 500. No one—then or now—knows who the author of the creed was, but because it was such a strong defense of Christ’s divinity, the creed came to be contributed to Athanasius, even though he was not the author.

Athanasius was a bishop in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, from A.D. 328-373. He distinguished himself as a great defender of the faith against the Arian heresy and was present at the Council of Nicaea.

The Athanasian Creed is also known as the “Quicunque Vult” taken from the opening words in Latin, “Whoever will be saved . . .” The Athanasian Creed is traditionally confessed on Trinity Sunday due to its masterful wording which describes the relationship between the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Practice

The Nicene Creed is traditionally confessed during the Divine Service. The Apostles’ Creed is traditionally confessed in the service of Baptism and in devotions. The Athanasian Creed traditionally replaced the Gradual on Trinity Sunday in the Divine Service, although commonly it replaces the Nicene Creed.
The Hymn of the Day
(The Propers, Part V)

Origin

Hymns have always maintained prominent places in the liturgy. They are prominently displayed throughout the Scriptures (The Song of Moses, The Benedictus, The Magnificat, The Nunc Dimittis, etc.). However, the development of the Hymn of the Day can be seen as particularly Lutheran. “In the golden age of church music (Reformation and Post-Reformation Age) a series of hymns gradually developed in the Lutheran Church which had their established place between the Epistle and the Gospel. In most cases these hymns responded to the Gospel of the day, which is usually the dominant motif in the service. Their use was so self-evident that the Kantor put the number of The Hymn of the Day on the hymn board without knowing what other hymns would be chosen for the service; parents could tell their children on the evening before the First Sunday in Advent, ‘Tomorrow we shall sing ‘Savior of the Nations, Come’,’” (Ralph Gehrke, Planning the Service, 6).

Purpose

As the Word of God dwells in us it calls forth songs of faith and love. This hymn reflects the particular theme of the readings which we have heard. Hymns are to be looked upon as propers of the service, responding to the main lesson of the day. This hymn in particular can be used throughout the week to bring to mind the themes of Sunday. This hymn also prepares our hearts for the preaching of the Word in the Sermon.

Practice

Materials for planning the service often guide pastors and musicians with regard to this hymn. However there also is historic tradition for many Sundays regarding the Hymn of the Day. The First Sunday of Advent has consistently been celebrated with “Savior of the Nations Come;” Christmas Day with “We Praise You Jesus at Your Birth;” and Easter with “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands.”
Early Lutheran practice associated strictly German hymns with the Sundays for obvious reasons. In recent centuries however English hymns too have become cherished treasures. These hymns are precisely those, treasures which encapsulate the clearest elements of doctrine and the Gospel which build on the propers of the week.

**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect on: 332, 382, 395, 458.
From the Scriptures: Psalm 113; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16.
From the Catechism: The Third Commandment, LSB 321.
The Sermon

For God

The preacher who speaks faithfully the intent and the meaning of God’s Word is speaking for God. The preacher’s words should not be viewed as mere opinion or subjective thoughts of some man, but as the voice of God declaring His truth to the world. The pastor is not standing in the pulpit because of his own initiative but by the command and calling of God, “And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:15)

From the Scriptures

Historically, the sermon expounds on a portion of the Scripture read as the lesson for the day. The New Testament shows Jesus as a textual preacher when He read the assigned reading for the day and then preached on the text (see St. Luke 4:16-22).

By the Authority of the Church

The call from the congregation to the pastor gives the pastor the duty to proclaim God’s Word; the authority to guide the people in the right paths of God’s will through preaching and teaching (cf. Ephesians 4:12 KJV).

To the People

A good sermon will speak to real life problems of sin and sorrow from which the people in the pew suffer. God’s Law will be proclaimed and applied in order to confront Original Sin and Actual Sins. God’s Gospel will be proclaimed and applied in order to bring salvation to those who suffer under sin and to give assurance of God’s enduring love.

The proclamation of God’s Word is a means of grace, that is, God’s grace is given to the believer through His Word. A sermon therefore is Christ-centered and not just moral instruction or encouragement. The one thing which sets a sermon apart from any other kind of speech is its preaching of Christ.
While Law is mentioned—and necessary—in every sermon, the heart of the Christian sermon is not ultimately proclamation of law. Any law which is proclaimed is always answered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He alone is the focal point of all proclamations of God’s love. As Christ is proclaimed and His Word is heard, He enters the hearts of His people and blesses them with faith and new life in Him.

**Practice**

Traditionally the sermon ends with the Votum: “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7. This is the benediction after the Sermon, assuring the believing worshipers that the peace of God, in Christ Jesus, offered and bestowed in the preached Word, will keep their hearts and minds in true faith unto everlasting life.

**During the Week**

For devotions: Review the Third Commandment and the Office of the Keys. Consider your own pastor in the words of the Third Commandment and his office as pastor in your midst. Pray for him that times of refreshing come when “dry spells” hit. Compliment him when his proclamation of Law and Gospel “hit home,” convicting you and comforting you.

A hymn to sing: 586 and 589.
The Offering and the Offertory

Origin

Originally the *Offertorium* and Offering were for the presentation of the Bread and Wine at the altar. Now the Lord’s Supper is prepared during the Offering, but what is collected from the congregation are the first-fruits of faith.

In the Old Testament God asked His people to tithe, that is, to give 10% of all they had to Him. In fact, one scholar has counted up all the required offerings in the Old Testament book of Leviticus and the percentage figure for giving comes to 26 ½%! These offerings were used to support the work of the temple and its ministers.

In the New Testament God no longer asks merely 10% from His people. The attitude that once a person gives 10% to God once can use the other for one’s self is not found in the New Testament. Instead, an attitude of abundant, grateful, total giving is seen, as in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Christian giving in the New Testament and among the New Testament people—which includes us—is no longer governed by a law of 10%. Our first fruits giving comes out of thankful hearts in response to the Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave His all for us.

Purpose

The offering of the fruit of our labors in the money which we give for the support of the Church and her Ministry, for the Poor, for Home and Foreign Missions, for Education, for Orphanages and other forms of Christian benevolence. These offerings indication our dedication to God with all that we are and have. We also acknowledge that all that we have comes from God.

The Offertory, taken traditionally from Psalm 51, is a response to our hearing the Word of God. The Offertory serves as a transition from the Service of the Word to the Service of the Lord’s Supper. It is an evidence that the Word, just heard, has been appropriated by us and has become effective in us. In it we offer ourselves to God that he may cleanse our hearts from sin, deepen our faith, and prepare us for the reception of the Visible Word in the Holy Sacrament.
Practice

Although the traditional Offertory comes from Psalm 51, “Create in me” recent liturgical revisions have provided two additional texts: “Let the vineyards be fruitful,” and “What shall I render to the Lord.”

During the Week

For your devotions read from The Small Catechism the Seventh Commandment and the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

A hymn to sing: 783/784, “Take My Life and Let It Be.”
The Prayer of the Church

Origin

The Prayer of the Church is founded on God’s Word which instructs us, “I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks he made for all men” (I Timothy 2:1-4). There are many examples in God’s Word where God encourages us in what to pray for, such as forgiveness, strength to resist temptation, the ministry of His Word, the good welfare of our neighbor, our enemies and the coming of the Last Day. The Prayer of the Church is broad and comprehensive. Longer than the other prayers offered during worship, the Prayer of the Day includes petitions for many people and many needs.

The place of The Prayer of the Church in the Divine Service

The Prayer of the Church comes at the end of the Service of the Word. After the pastor has pronounced us forgiven and redeemed, after we have heard God’s Word read and preached upon, only then do we make our special appeals to God. This prayer flows from the hearts of people whose lives have been filled with grace.

During the Week

For your devotions read “How the Head of the Family Should Teach His Household to Pray Morning and Evening” from The Small Catechism.

A Hymn to sing: “Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You” (LSB 668).
The Preface (The Proper Preface)  
(The Propers, Part VI)

Origin

The preface can be traced back to the third century. The preface is now used throughout the Christian Church.

Purpose

The preface marks the introduction to the Liturgy of the Holy Communion. It is a High Thanksgiving consisting of the Salutation and Response, the Prefatory Sentences, The Common and Proper Prefaces and finally the Sanctus.

The purpose of the preface is to praise God for the gift of salvation most distinctively revealed for believers in the Sacrament of the Altar. Here as we approach the Lord’s Supper to individually receive this gift, what is emphasized in the corporate, united action. The unity we hold is emphasized with plural pronouns. “Your, we, us” express this unity beautifully and they move the congregation and pastor to focus on the relationship they have together in Christ.

This conversation that the preface is takes places in the very presence of God. Here we recognize even more fully this presence as the Lord’s Supper is celebrated. For what else is taking place, than that we are now fully within God’s realm. His kingdom is worshiping with us and we with them. That is why the proper preface concludes “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven.” Here now is heaven on earth. The church militant (those on earth) joins in worship gloriously revealed here with the church triumphant (those in heaven). Here we join with those who have gone before us in the faith to the heavenly home. Those who have died in the faith gather as the “great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) to encourage us. And what do we do? We praise the God who brings about this cosmic union. We are moved to sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” in the Sanctus. What a grand and glorious opportunity we the people of God are given, as we are given a glimpse into heaven at this time of the “foretaste of the feast to come.”
Practice

As with the Collect of the Day, the Preface begins with the Salutation and Response, “The Lord be with you; And with Thy Spirit” (St. Luke 1:28, Ruth 2:4, and II Timothy 4:22). It greets the congregation with a blessing, invites attention, and incites devotion. With the response, the people ask a blessing upon the Pastor, and pray that the Lord may give him a devout mind, and guide him in the Service of the Sacrament.

The remaining sentences, “Lift up your hearts” and “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” with their responses are reflexive but important. The first means to think of nothing earthly, but rise and go to the very throne of God and offer prayer and praise; for not only is Christ present in the Sacrament here but He sits at the right hand of God. This is fully expressed in the Sanctus. The second, after leading people to the throne of God, the pastor rouses their minds to a sense of His benefits and suggests the nature of the prayer that is offered in the Proper Preface.

The Proper Preface changes seasonally throughout the Church year, and on festival services. This is done to emphasize the unique aspect of Christ’s earthly life revealed during that particular season of the Church year. At Christmas, the emphasis is chiefly on the incarnation, God born in human flesh: “in the mystery of the Word made flesh You have given us a new revelation of Your glory.” Each preface highlights the theological themes and emphases of the seasons. The preface begins and ends the same way, the proper portion being the middle. The conclusion, “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven,” reminds us that here in Church most uniquely at the altar, heaven and earth meet. The believer is awash in the kingdom of God. Here now, things are don God’s way and the believer is transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:2). What an awesome miracle of God is accomplished!

During the Week

Hymns to reflect on: 670, 661, 664, 812, and 618.
From the Scriptures: Psalms 100 & 107; Hebrews 12; Revelation 7:9-17..
From the Catechism: Christian Questions and Their Answers, LSB 329-330.
The Sanctus
(The Ordinary, Part IV)

Origin

The Sanctus, as a musical portion of the liturgy, can be traced back to the fourth century. Some scholars suggest its use may be found in older Jewish worship in the temple. The Sanctus is the most ancient, celebrated, and universal of Christian hymns. The two parts of the Sanctus come from Isaiah 6 and the Triumphant entry.

Meaning

Sanctus is Latin for “holy,” the first words of the Ordinary. These are the words of the seraphim in the throne room from Isaiah 6. They and we address God as the “Lord God of Sabaoth,” that is the Lord of hosts (armies). The first portion is an exalted strain of praise, in which the saints on earth join the angels in heaven in declaring God’s perfection, and in proclaiming that His glory as manifested in Creation and Redemption fills all things.

Following the words of the seraphim, is the Benedictus qui venit (Blessed is he who comes). These words come from Psalm 118:26 and are also the words of the crowds who met Jesus as he entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Hosanna is a prayerful request from Hebrew, meaning “Save us now, we pray!” Here we hail Christ as our Savior and Deliverer and we look forward to the Administration, in which the Lord comes to each believer.

Purpose

The Sanctus moves us to recall where we are, in the presence of the Holy One, who could command the hosts of heaven to come and destroy His creation. Instead, He comes again in the name of the Lord to bless His people. The Sanctus reminds us that God, although entirely separate and distinct from us, comes to us and draws us to Himself in this Sacrament. Here the power of God’s Word prepares our hearts for the reception of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament. Our voices join with the angelic voices praising God for His glory and might. Then we join in
welcoming the Christ whom we receive in the mystery of the Holy Sacrament.

**Practice**

Traditionally at the *Sanctus* it is proper to bow for the words of the seraphim. These words praise the Triune God and exalt the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In remembrance of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and what this means for the Christian it is also proper to make the sign of the cross when *Blessed is he* is sung (the *Benedictus qui venit*). If the organ has a *zimbelstern* (a small set of bells), these are appropriately rung during the *Sanctus*.

**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect upon: 507, 960, 632, 433.
Please read: The Third Article of the Creed, pp. 323.
The Our Father

Origin

The Lord’s Prayer comes to us from the Lord Jesus Christ who taught it to his disciples after they asked “Lord teach us to pray.”

Meaning

The Lord’s Prayer (St. Matthew 6:5ff. and St. Luke 11:1ff.) is an especially clear expression of the desires we should carry to God. In this prayer Jesus teaches us to pray for all we need in this life. We need the Father to hallow His name among us, to bring His Kingdom of grace to us, to accomplish His will in our lives, to provide for our daily sustenance, to forgive us of our sins, to lead us and deliver us as we go through this world. What we recognize in this prayer is that God is the doer and we are the receiver of his gifts.

From ancient times the Our Father has always been regarded as a divine and spiritual form of prayer, which can never fail to move our heavenly Father, because His Son taught us thus to pray. On this Cyprian says beautifully: “What prayer can be more spiritual than that which was given us by Christ, by Whom also the Holy Spirit was sent? What petition more true before the Father than that which came from the lips of His Son, Who is the Truth?”

Purpose

This prayer puts us in mind of the Lord who has called us together. Here is our prayer of sonship, our prayer of brotherhood, our family prayer. This is a prayer of humble access, as we are drawn ever more fully to the throne of God. Expressed here are our deepest needs and the fundamental needs of humanity. Where these answers are clearly displayed for us and received by us is in the Sacrament of Holy Communion to which this prayer leads us. There our deepest hunger is satisfied.

Practice

The Lord’s Prayer is prayed just prior to communion, as the richness of Christ’s goodness which we are about to receive in His body and blood is
that upon which we focus. The petitions in this prayer lead us to seek God’s hand of blessing and to find that in His Word and Sacrament.

Historically, its use was esteemed the peculiar privilege of true believers. Hence it was said not in the first part of the worship but in the Communion Service, from which the heathen and the catechumens (the unbaptized) were excluded. The latter were strictly forbidden to utter it. Chrysostom explains it this way: “Not until we have been cleansed by the washing of the sacred waters are we able to call God, Father.”

In Churches where kneelers are used, one may kneel at this point in the service and stay kneeling until after the Agnus Dei. It is appropriate to make the sign of the cross at the petition, “but deliver us from evil.” Here we are reminded of Christ’s victory over the evil one, the Devil, which is given to us in baptism. This reality is also shared with us in the Supper in the forgiveness of sins given to us in our Lord’s body and blood.

**Final Note**

The doxology, “For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever,” is a liturgical interpolation. Our text of the Lord’s Prayer follows the ancient liturgical and popular use rather than any single translation of the Scriptures as a whole.

**During the Week**

Hymns to reflect upon: 766, 779, 758.
From the Scriptures: Psalms 28, 40, 80 & 139; Romans 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.
Please Read: The Lord’s Prayer in *Luther’s Small Catechism*, pp. 302-303 in LSB.
The Verba Domini

Origin

The Words of Institution, the Words of Our Lord (Verba Domini) are also known as the “consecration.” They are spoken in response to Christ’s mandate, “This do.” These words are not to be understood as a magic formula which changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. It is not a work of man which causes Christ’s presence. Rather, Christ is present in the meal through the whole action of consecration, distribution and reception. The Words of Institution are spoken at every celebration of the Lord’s Supper because Christ has given them to His Church to do so.

In Ancient Practice

During the Middle Ages the Words of Institution were whispered by the priest so that only he heard them. The purpose of the practice went hand in hand with Rome’s theology that the priest affected the sacrifice. This practice was even viewed as magic, thanks to the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Martin Luther brought the Verba back to their proper place as Words chanted aloud for the congregation to hear.

The practice of kneeling to receive the body and blood of our Lord became general practice throughout the Western Church sometime after the twelfth century. Scripture itself is silent on the posture one takes when receiving the Lord’s Supper, but standing or kneeling are both common and appropriate practices for reception of the Lord’s Supper.

The Importance of the Words of Institution

Luther spoke of the Verba as “the Gospel in a nutshell.” Here the Gospel is proclaimed. These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins” assure the Church of what they receive in the Holy Communion. These words are recorded for us in St. Matthew 26:26-29; St. Mark 14:22-25; St. Luke 22:19-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

These words teach our Lord’s mandate, what we are to do in the supper: Take, eat; Take, drink. They teach that His very body and very blood are present with the bread and wine and these are given for the Church to eat and to drink. They teach that in the words “given and shed for you for the
forgiveness of sins” Christ takes our place and suffers death in our stead, and we then take his place and are counted righteous for his sake. This benefit belongs to every communicant who believes Christ’s Words.

**Practice**

Luther taught that the Words of Institution should be chanted in order to emphasize the importance of the words of Christ and the importance of what takes place in the Supper. He even provided us with a particular tone based on the Gospel chants used widely in his day.

Our hymnals and service books have retained this throughout the centuries, even in LSB. Of course speaking the Words of Institution can also be a salutary practice, there is no law here. But originally the speaking of the *Verba* was introduced in Reformed (Calvinist and Zwinglian) churches to emphasize that nothing important or special does happen in the Verba and Consecration. The same is true with the *fractio panis* or the breaking of the bread. Reformed pastors broke the host during the *Verba* to show that Christ was not there bodily, but only spiritually.

Also appropriate, but neither commanded nor forbidden, are the practices of elevating the elements (lifting them up for all to see and adore) and the genuflection. These practices are becoming more widespread in Lutheran churches but are often viewed as Roman Catholic.

The important thing to remember is that when any practice is taught or adopted, does this practice teach Christ crucified? Here the elevation and genuflection do, because in them proper honor is given to the bodily presence of Christ in the Supper given and shed for you.

**During the Week**

The Pax Domini

Origin

“The Peace of the Lord” – these words (the English for Pax Domini) are a remnant of two much older observances. The first was a blessing offered by the pastor to the congregation just prior to the communing of the people. This helped emphasize that in Christ’s body and blood peace is received by the people. In one way, the Lord’s body and blood is “edible peace.” The peace announced by the angels at the birth of Christ—“Peace on earth and goodwill to all men”—this peace is finally realized among God’s people still on earth by being given the same body and the same blood born in Bethlehem. It is also the same body which died and rose from the dead on Easter. So these words also are evocative of Christ’s declarations of peace on Easter (St. John 20:19, 21).

Following the speaking of these words of peace the ancient Church would dismiss the catechumens (those still being instructed in the faith and not yet ready to receive the sacrament). From this practice comes the term “closed” or “close” communion, in short describing the action of the doors being closed behind those leaving the worship assembly.

The second observance of the peace was “the kiss of peace.” This practice involved the congregation members actually kissing the people next to them as an outward sign of forgiveness and brotherly love which was theirs in Christ Jesus. Separation of gender in the worship assembly protected against confusion in the exchange of this sign of peace. The kiss of peace is known to have been practiced in apostolic times. St. Paul refers to this four times in his Epistles (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; and 1 Thessalonians 5:26). The practice continued until about the thirteenth century.

The Importance of the Pax Domini

Luther taught that The Peace is a form of absolution. He wrote, “It is the voice of the Gospel announcing the forgiveness of sins, the only and most worthy preparation for the Lord’s table.” In our day this still holds true. True peace is found for us in Christ Jesus whose body and blood are given for us. He secures that peace eternally. We respond with, “Amen.” “Yes, Lord, it shall be so.”
The Agnus Dei
(The Ordinary, Part V)

*Agnus Dei* is Latin for “Lamb of God.” Originally these words were the first words of a hymn. Martin Luther added “O Christ” at the beginning of each of the three lines on or before 1528 so that they became “O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.”

**Origin**

The *Agnus Dei* was originally a communion hymn sung during the “Fraction” (the breaking of the bread into smaller pieces by the pastor after the speaking of the *Verba*). The song was introduced into the Divine Service around A.D. 700. The words “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” would be sung over and over again until the loaf was broken into as many pieces as were needed for communion. By the ninth and tenth centuries the hymn more often was sung during the distribution.

**The importance of the Agnus Dei**

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” was spoken by John the Baptist as both an announcement of fact and as a greeting. These words are a confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. These words draw us to our Savior who is present in flesh and blood in His Supper. The words of the Forerunner confess the physical presence of Jesus before us and it is He and He alone who takes our sins away through His body and blood. The *Agnus Dei* becomes both a confession and a declaration of the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper and His forgiveness given to us in the Supper.

Due to the strong confession of Christ’s bodily presence in the text, the *Agnus Dei* has not been a historic part of Reformed liturgies. The Reformed do not teach that Christ is bodily present in the Lord’s Supper.

**During the Week**

Read The Second Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism.

A Hymn to Sing: LSB 434, “Lamb of God, Pure and Holy”
The Distribution

The point when people receive the body and blood of Christ is the high point of the Divine Service. At that moment the worshippers on earth are united to the heavens and all the saints who feast at the heavenly banquet. Christ and all that He offers is given. Sins are forgiven and faith is strengthened. The Holy Spirit restores holiness and gives power to resist sin and live holier lives.

Here more than anywhere else Christians learn of the incarnation of God in the flesh. Jesus is not a mysterious, unapproachable God who remains in the heavens and commands us to rise up and meet Him. He is the Savior who lowers Himself to us, so much so that we can see Him and touch Him and taste His body and blood. He is the Savior who makes Himself readily available to us in tangible ways.

Practice

The earliest practice of the Church seems to be that the Lord’s body and blood were received while the people of God stood. Sometime after the twelfth century kneeling became the common practice. Both customs are found within the Lutheran Church today. Kneeling offers Christians a particularly meaningful posture of humility and reverence when receiving this most holy meal.

The Host can be received directly in the mouth of the communicant or in the hands. Many churches offer both the chalice or common cup and individual cups. Historically the chalice was the sole means of distributing our Lord’s blood. Understandably in today’s churches there is a mixture of those who prefer both practices. Although there is profound symbolism in sharing the common cup, some prefer the individual cups. Both practices are certainly acceptable methods of distribution.

It is also taught that when the Pastor speaks the words of distribution to the communicant may say “Amen.” The symbolism here is clear. When one hears, “The body of Christ, given for you,” the proper response is definitely, “Yes, yes, it shall be so.” Likewise this practice is appropriate with the blood of Christ.
Being made part of a three-fold unity

The Lord’s Supper testifies of a three-fold union: Christ united with the elements of bread and wine, Christ united with the people who rightly receive His body and blood, and the recipient united with both the fellow Christians at the Lord’s Supper and also with those who have gone before them in the faith.

The most important part of the union is that Christ is with us as He physically meets us with His grace to forgive all of our sins and restores us to right faith and life in Him. The union of the believer with the other believers joined at the Lord’s table, however, is also important. Here at the altar, more than anywhere else, we are making a public statement that we all share the same faith given by Christ (summarized by the faith as articulated in the Creeds, not just limited to the sole teaching about the Lord’s Supper).

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” I Corinthians 10:17

When those of a different confession of faith commune together, a false and unbiblical witness is given that unity of faith exists when in reality it does not. The biblical, early Christian and historical practice of close(d) communion is the only practice which truly witnesses to the profound unity of Christ in us and also that we are united in one faith and mind in Him.

During the Week

Read “Christian Questions with Their Answers” found in the hymnal, p. 329-330.
Hymns to Sing: LSB 618, 619
The Post-Communion Canticle

Origin

The singing of a communion verse is an ancient practice. Anciently Psalms 145 and 34, together with appropriate antiphons (responses), were sung during the communing of the people until all had received the Lord’s body and blood. At that point the singing closed with the Gloria Patri (Glory be to the Father). In the “Formula Missae” Luther provided for the singing of the communion verse, followed by a collect. This practice of Luther is the practice we carry on today.

Meaning

Having now received the Lord’s body and blood we are moved to sing His praises for this most precious gift. These moments following the reception should be abundant in grace. We have communed with our Lord, received Him into our bodies. We have received anew the assurance of God’s forgiveness and His blessing rests on us for as we are promised through this Supper, we are at peace with Him.

Practice

In the Common Service the Post-Communion Canticle is the Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon from St. Luke 2. This is a particularly Lutheran innovation to the service. Here Simeon takes God’s flesh and blood into his hands in the infant Jesus and realizes that he is seeing his salvation from God. You also have taken the flesh and blood of the Son of God into your hands and mouth in the Lord’s Supper and through this reception you see your salvation.

With Lutheran Worship and now Lutheran Service Book, an alternate Post Communion Canticle is provided, “Thank the Lord.” It was prepared by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. It is a paraphrase of Psalm 105.

The Nunc Dimittis is always an appropriate canticle for this portion of the service. However during Passiontide (Holy Week) it is appropriate to omit the Gloria Patri. “Thank the Lord” is most appropriate during Eastertide and perhaps All Saints Tide (the Sundays following November 1st). “Thank the Lord” is not appropriate in Lent, due to its use of Alleluias (it may also distract from the penitential mood of Advent).
The Thanksgiving

Origin

As early as the 4th century one can find in liturgies a short prayer following communion. The prayer “We give thanks you, Almighty God” is authored by Martin Luther. A second option is also provided historically, “O God the Father,” comes from a 13th century English rite.

Meaning

The Thanksgiving prayer forms a bridge between what we have received at the Lord’s Table how that impacts our lives as God’s people. We are personally “refreshed” as Christ’s body and blood remove the burden of our sin. Our faith is strengthened and we are enlivened to show Christian love to others. These prayers clearly reflect the benefits faith receives in the Lord’s Supper.

God is the one who acts upon our hearts. The Spirit directs and motivates our service to God in the world, a service we can now perform as God has enlivened and refreshed us through the Sacrament of His Son. We are the recipients of His goodness. He is the one who gives, refreshes, strengthens, and justifies us through his good gifts.

During the Week

Hymns to Reflect on: LSB 617, 643
Readings from the Scriptures: Psalm 30; 1 Corinthians 10 & 11; 2 Corinthians 2:12-17.
The Benedicamus and Benediction

Origin

The *Benedicamus*, “Bless we the Lord,” arose in the tenth century. It functions as a doxology ending each of the five books within the book of Psalms (Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106, and 150). It is a fitting conclusion for the congregation as they leave the house of God, their final expression in response to God’s blessings is thanks.

The Benediction is the Aaronic Benediction (Numbers 6:24-27). This also is a uniquely Lutheran practice. Aaron and his sons were directed to use this benediction from God himself. Following the giving of this benediction God spoke this instruction, “They shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” The Aaronic Benediction was included in Luther’s “Deutsche Messe” (German Mass) of 1526.

Meaning

The *Benedicamus* introduces God’s final act of this service. The service now draws to a close with a strain of praise and thanksgiving for the fullness of God’s grace which has been unfolded throughout the worship service.

The Benediction grants a blessing of assurance from God’s grace. God places his name on his people, as He did in baptism. The Benediction is Triune, calling to mind the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

Purpose

The *Benedicamus* and Benediction recall for us what the Church experiences in the Divine Service. This recalling takes place as we are moved to sing our thanks for God’s good gifts. Now the Pastor, speaking from Christ’s office, pronounces God’s name and blessing on the congregation. Following it the people return to their daily lives under the care and protection of God.
The Service begins and ends with the blessings of the Triune God. Here believers receive the work of God through His Word and Sacraments. He works here for the sake of His church.

**During the Week**

Hymns to Reflect on: LSB 924, 656, 666.
Readings from the Scriptures: Psalm 103; Numbers 6; Luke 24