

A NARRATIVE COMMENTARY
on
THE DIVINE SERVICE, LSB 3

COMMENTARY I: INTRODUCTION

The high and holy worship of God is faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is created and sustained by God's Service to us. In the Divine Service, the Lord comes to us in His Word and Sacrament to bless and enliven us with His gifts. This Service is not something we do for God, but His service to us to be received in faith. The "liturgy" is God's work. He gives, we receive. Each part of the Divine Service this morning will be introduced with a short commentary, designed to help us understand the structure and biblical content of the Divine Service, so that we might more fully rejoice in the gifts that our Savior gives us in His liturgy. John 4:20-26; Hebrews 8:1-6

You will notice during the Service that the Pastor will change position frequently. There is a definite reason for this. When he faces us, this indicates that he is God's spokesman and that through him God is speaking to us. We are in a "sacramental" or "God-giving" portion of the Service. When he joins us in facing the altar, this indicates that we are speaking to God together in prayer and praise. This is a "sacrificial" or "man-giving" part. We sing the Hymn of Invocation.

-Hymn of Invocation-

COMMENTARY II: INVOCATION

From God's Word, we know that wherever God puts His Name, there He is to bless. In the Old Testament, the Temple was the place where God graciously caused His Name to be present.

God has put His Name-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on us in Holy Baptism. The Divine Service begins "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Every Divine Service is for the hallowing of the Lord's Name, which the Small Catechism reminds us is done "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God, also lead a holy life according to it." 1 Kings 8:27-30; Matthew 28:18-20

-Invocation-

COMMENTARY III: CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

It is only through the forgiveness of sins that we enter into the life of heaven. To confess our sins is to speak the truth about our lives. God seeks that truth in the heart and on the lips. To confess our sin is to say "Amen" to God's just verdict that we have sinned against Him and so deserve only death and hell. 1 John 1:8-10

The truth of our sinfulness is answered by the truth of God's forgiveness for the sake of the suffering and death of His Son. From the lips of a man "called and ordained" as a servant of the Word, we hear God Himself speaking absolution, that is, forgiveness of sins. To that forgiveness, faith says "Amen," that is "Truth." "Amen" is the great word of worship; it indicates that the gift has been received. John 20:19-23

-Confession and Absolution-

COMMENTARY IV: INTROIT

Having received the Lord's forgiveness, we are glad to enter into His courts with praise and thanksgiving. This entrance is made in the Introit with the Lord's own words, most often drawn from the Psalms. Psalm 100

-Introit-

COMMENTARY V: KYRIE, HYMN OF PRAISE

Kyrie eleison is a Greek phrase meaning "Lord, have mercy." In the Kyrie we come before the King of Mercy with the prayer that was on the lips of Blind Bartimaeus, whom Jesus healed. We approach our Merciful Savior and King as citizens of heaven, seeking His mercy for our salvation, the peace of the whole world, the well-being of His Church, our Worship, and our everlasting defense.

Mark 10:49

The Lord to whom we cry for mercy is the Savior who has come to us in the flesh. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth" echoes the hymn that the high angels of God sang to the shepherds at Bethlehem. In this hymn we acclaim and extol the Son of God who humbled Himself to be our Brother and now reigns over us as Savior from the right hand of His Father.

Luke 2:14

-Kyrie, Hymn of Praise-

COMMENTARY VI: SALUTATION, COLLECT

The pastor stands in the congregation as Christ's servant. The vestments he wears indicates that he is not speaking on his own, but as one sent and authorized to represent Christ Jesus. As the authorized representative of the Lord he says "The Lord be with you." The congregation responds "And also with you." Pastor and congregation are bound together in this salutation, or greeting as the pastor prays the Collect of the Day on behalf of the gathered congregation. 2 Timothy 4:22

The Collect is a short prayer that "collects" in one short petition all it is that we are asking God to do for us on the basis of the Word which we are about to hear, read and preached. Philippians 4:6

-Salutation, Collect of the Day-

COMMENTARY VII: OLD TESTAMENT READING, GRADUAL, EPISTLE, VERSE, HOLY GOSPEL, HYMN OF THE DAY, SERMON

We have reached a climax in our Service. Up to now we have been speaking to God, presenting ourselves, our needs, and our hopes before the throne of grace. Now God speaks to us. He will reveal Himself and His will in a special way--in the reading and preaching of His Word. God has made Himself known to us in the Bible; He speaks to us today through these words of Scripture. This is the source of what we believe and teach. Without the Word of God our worship, as well as our faith, would wither and die.

In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul tells us that the Ascended Christ gave gifts to His Church: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor-Teachers. These gifts are made manifest in the Divine Service as we hear God's Word read and proclaimed. Ephesians 4:11

First, we hear from a Prophet in the words of the Old Testament Reading.

Second, we hear from an Apostle in the words of a New Testament Epistle. From the Apostle we are given the truth that is in Jesus for our faith and life.

Third, we hear from an Evangelist in the words of the Holy Gospel. In the words of the Evangelist we are given the Word of Life, Jesus Christ. The congregation acknowledges the Lord's presence in His Gospel by standing and extolling His glory and praising Him.

Fourth, in continuity with the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, our Pastor stands in our midst to deliver the Lord's Law and Gospel in the sermon. He is God's mouth for the congregation as through him the Good Shepherd's voice sounds forth to call, gather, and enlighten His flock. Luke 10:16

This morning, instead of being localized in one place in the Service, the sermon has been spread throughout the Service in the form of explanatory remarks, which point out for us our sin and God's love as they are expressed in the Liturgy. In this form the sermon still carries the same essential message.

-Readings etc-

COMMENTARY VIII: CREED

Having heard the Word of God, we confess our faith in His Name. The Creed is our saying back to God what He has first said to us. In the Creed, we acclaim the truth of the Triune God and His work of salvation as accomplished for us in His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.

-Creed-

The service continues in the Hymn of the Day. As the Word of God dwells in us it calls forth songs of faith and love. This hymn reflects the particular theme of the Scripture Readings which we have heard.

- Hymn of the Day-

COMMENTARY IX: THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

God's Word is always primary in worship. We speak only as we are spoken to. Gathered in Jesus' Name, we bring the petitions and thanksgivings before Him that grow out of His Word. This prayer is called the Prayer of the Church for in it the royal Priesthood of All Believers does its priestly work of making supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

-The Prayer of the Church-

COMMENTARY X: OFFERING

Our Order of Service continues on page 22 of your hymnal. In the OFFERTORY sentences, using David's words of repentance from Psalm 51, we confess our humble and grateful acceptance of the Word and offer ourselves and our substance in thanksgiving to the Lord. The OFFERTORY is also our preparation for the coming SACRAMENT, as we look forward to our sacred Communion with the living Lord. Immediately after the OFFERTORY we who have been purified and strengthened bring our sacrifices and offerings to God's altar. These gifts can be meaningful only if we recognize them as tokens of our entire selves, our whole lives, given in worship and service to our Lord.

The gifts are placed on the altar, from which we will soon receive the very Body and Blood of our Lord. This reminds us that the sanctified Christian, through the action of God's Holy Spirit, continually gives himself up to God, as God comes into him to live in his heart.

-Offering/Offertory-

COMMENTARY XI: PREFACE, SANCTUS, PRAYER, OUR FATHER

Now the Pastor turns to us with the same SALUTATION he had used earlier, and he receives the same response as we move into the second major portion of our Service. Then comes the invitation to "lift up your hearts" and to "give thanks unto the Lord, our God." This reminds us that our entire Communion Service is entered into with thanksgiving. It is indeed "meet, right, and salutary" that we should give thanks to God for all His marvelous gifts, as we now do in the singing of the "Holy, Holy, Holy," or SANCTUS. The prophet Isaiah was granted a vision of heaven in which he saw the hosts adoring God with these words, and we unite with them and with the Church Universal in adoration before the throne of God. The second part of this song comes from Christ's entry into Jerusalem, when the crowds sang, "Blessed is He that cometh...." This reminds us that He is about to come into our own hearts and lives. Hosanna in the highest! Lamentations 3:41; Mark 11:9-10

The LORD'S PRAYER is the distinctive property of Christians. We are here reminded that we are together in the family of God, that at this Communion table we are not many individuals, but one body, brothers and sisters in the faith, whose spiritual welfare is closely linked together.

-Preface, Sanctus, Prayer, Our Father-

COMMENTARY XII: CONSECRATION, PAX DOMINI, AGNUS DEI, DISTRIBUTION The pastor speaks the Lord's own words; these words give and bestow what they declare, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood is the vehicle for peace. Showing them His wounds, the Risen Lord declared His peace to His disciples on Easter Evening. That same peace is given us with the Lord's Body and Blood. With the words of John the Baptist, the Agnus Dei confesses the mercy and peace that we receive from the Lamb of God in His Supper. We come to the Lord's Table hungry and thirsty, and He feeds us with His Body and refreshes us with His Blood. It is the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 20:21, John 1:29

-Consecration, Pax Domini, Agnus Dei, Distribution-

COMMENTARY XIII: POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE, PRAYER

Having received the Lord's Body and Blood for our salvation, like Simeon who held in his arms the Savior of the world, we go in peace and joy singing Simeon's Song from St. Luke, Chapter 2. Before we leave the Lord's Table, we give thanks, asking that the salutary gift of Jesus' Body and Blood would have its way in our lives, strengthening us in faith toward God and fervent love toward one another. The Sacrament draws us outside of ourselves to live in Christ by faith and in the neighbor by love, to paraphrase Luther. Luke 2:29-32; 1 Chronicles 16:8-10

-Post-Communion Canticle, Prayer-

COMMENTARY XIV: BENEDICTION, HYMN

The Name of the Lord is the beginning and the end of the Divine Service. We are now marked with the Lord's Name in the Benediction--that word of God's Blessing from Numbers 6 in which He favors us with His grace and peace. With the Lord's Name given us in Holy Baptism we were drawn together. Now with that same Name, He sends us back into the world, to the places of our various callings to live by the mercy we have received as living sacrifices to the praise of His glory and the good of our neighbor. Numbers 6:22-27; Romans 12:1-2

-Benediction, Hymn-

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