

The Divine Service:
ACCESS TO GOD'S HOLY PRESENCE
TO RECEIVE HIS BLESSING IN CHRIST JESUS

A Narrative Meditation on
THE LUTHERAN LITURGY

“Let us draw near...”
(Hebrews 10:22)

Introduction

As Jacob lay down for sleep, he had a lot on his mind. Sins of his past lay on his conscience and an uncertain journey lay ahead. Fresh in his mind is recent family conflicts, sins of deception, stealing, and jealousy. He leaves behind his father Isaac, his mother Rebecca, and his brother Esau, in order to seek out a wife in another land. He was alone now. And as Jacob lay down, his conscience was troubled.

We read about this story in the Old Testament book of Genesis, chapter 28. That night as he sleeps, Jacob has a dream. He dreams a dream wherein God reveals a stairway descending from heaven to earth. Angels are ascending and descending upon the stairway. And there God addresses Jacob. “Behold I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; this land upon which you lie, I will give you and your descendants. I will bless you and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. Behold, where ever you go, I am with you and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoke to you.”

Jacob woke up renewed in the spirit of his mind. His conscience was cleansed, his heart was comforted, for he had received the promise and blessing of God. Jacob calls the place “Bethel” meaning “house of God.” There Jacob worships the Lord, saying: “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is none other than the gate to heaven.”

Today’s service is meant to help you recognize how God does the same thing for you in the liturgy – a joining together of heaven and earth. And what we mean when we say liturgy is the structure and flow of our Sunday morning worship service. As Lutherans, we see this worship event as an approach to the gate of heaven and entrance into God’s holy presence. It is a joining together of heaven and earth. Our purpose today is to offer you special narrative throughout the service to help you better understand the meaning and function of the Lutheran Liturgy.

The word "liturgy" means "service." It is a term drawn from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the word refers to the divine "service" that the priest would perform on behalf of God in mediating God's relationship with His people. The worship ceremonies that God instructed the priests and people to follow were designed to impart heavenly realities. The priest was instructed to offer sacrifices of animals in the presence of God which would sanctify the priests and people for service to God; that is to say, they were cleansed of their sin and made acceptable to come into His presence. God wanted his people to recognize that He was holy and the only way to safely approach Him was through the atonement He would provide. So He says in Leviticus, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). This sacrificial liturgy was mediated through the priest so that the people might be granted access to God holy presence and blessings.

Since Christ's resurrection, that same holiness and blessing is being mediated through Christ in His Church; only now we are under a new and better covenant. Through Word and Sacrament where ever believers are gathered, there the Church administers the Divine Service – or as we call it: "the Service of Word and Sacrament." When we use words like "draw near" or "come into His presence," these are not symbolic expressions. Jesus promises: in Matthew 18, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." And God has promised: "In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you, and I will bless you" (Exodus 20:24).

In John chapter 1 Jesus told Nathaniel, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Jesus is the gate to heaven; the "one Mediator between God and man, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5). And as He says in another place, "No one can come to the Father except by Me."

There is no other way to safely access God's presence than through Jesus. For sinful human beings, this would mean our doom. But by the cleansing sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are made holy. And by His living presence among us in the Word and Sacrament we are enabled to enter God's holiness. We receive this privilege by faith, as the writer to the Hebrews says:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19–22)

As we hear the Word of God and share in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, God grants us His Holy Spirit by faith. And His Spirit brings us the forgiveness of sins through Jesus and enabled us together with Jesus to enter the Most Holy Place where God dwells. This is the Divine Service. Sins of the past lay on the mind, an uncertain journey lay ahead, and we have come to "the House of God." Through Word and sacrament God descends to us to forgive our sins, bless us, and strengthen us in Christ Jesus.

<p style="text-align: center;">1. We Assemble in the Presence of God Preparation for worship</p>

OPENING PRAYER AND HYMN

When approaching God, you don't want to be rushed into worship somewhere during the first hymn. Entering into worship is about being aware of your conscience and preparing yourself to receive what God has promised. That is why it is helpful to aim to be seated at least five or ten minutes before worship begins. That way you have time to look over the service folder and pray and meditate on the word of God. We offer preservice devotions in the bulletin to help you with this. This is also why we begin our service with a prayer and hymn. This usually emphasizes preparation for worship with a hymn of praise or an invitation to prayer and confession. It will sometimes reflect the service theme of the day. Let us now approach God with humble prayerful hearts,

OPENING PRAYER

Minister (M): O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your Holy Word. We pray You to open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that by the preaching of Your Word we may be brought to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and to grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

INVOCATION, CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The invocation “invokes” God by calling upon the name which united us together with Christ in holy baptism. The invocation echoes the formula for baptism from Matthew 28. With the sign of the cross, we are bringing to remembrance the sign which was placed on our head and our heart at our baptism. Peter says that “baptism now saves us – not by removing dirt from the flesh, but rather by the appeal of a good conscience before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). This is our appeal to God for a good conscience. That is to say, baptism calls upon our right as forgiven children of God to come into His presence without fear and to call upon Him for blessing. So when you enter the sanctuary for worship think of your baptism. This is why, in our church, we have placed the baptismal font out front, where it can be seen and where it brings to mind the access we have before God as those He has called holy.

Let us then call upon Him who has washed us. We gather together ...

INVOCATION

Matthew 28:19

Minister (M) In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Congreg. (C) Amen.

When Jacob entered that holy vision, he was conflicted with sins of the past and the uncertainty of what lie ahead. He had lied, stolen, disobeyed his father, been compelled by jealous thoughts. How can Jacob, so conflicted, so uncertain, have confidence that God will go with him in the journey ahead?

We come to God’s house with that same sort of conflicts within. In any number of ways, the past week has confronted us with the temptations of the devil and our many sins and failures. The Divine Service is designed to speak to the heart and address the conscience with God’s Word and forgiveness. The confession and absolution is where we deal with these matters of conscience directly and upfront. As James writes: “Confess your trespasses to one another” (James 5:16). And John says that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). It is God’s utmost desire to give us a good conscience; that is to say, God want us to be rightly informed about sin and rightly turned to the comfort of Christ Jesus’ atoning work on the cross. Absolution is the key which brings us that atoning work and looses us from our sins and guilt. Jesus has promised that “if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven;” (John 20:23) and “whatsoever you loose on earth, shall have been loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). This is crucial to safely approaching God’s holy presence. These words truly come from Christ and truly open heaven to us. Here we are welcomed into God’s house, to hear the words of our Father and to be guests at His banquet meal. In Christ alone, we are sanctified for worship and strengthened for the journey ahead.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

M We have come into the presence of God who created us to love and serve Him as His dear children. But we have disobeyed Him and deserve only His wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Him and plead for His mercy.

C **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against You and do not deserve to be called Your child. But trusting in Jesus, My Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to Your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has removed your guilt forever. You are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will.

C **Amen.**

Amen declares our certainty. It should not be said half heartedly or in doubt. It is an expression of confidence, meaning: “this is most certainly true.” Try saying it again, this time with the certainty that God has removed our guilt forever and that You are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will...
“Amen!”

2. We Glorify Our Lord’s Presence

The Service of the Word begins

THE KYRIE AND THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

As Jesus was passing from Jericho toward Jerusalem, He came upon two blind beggars who were crying out: “Lord, have mercy!” Throughout His ministry, the sick, disabled, and demon possessed would crowd around Jesus seeking His aid. “Kyrie eleison” (‘ki(ə)rē,ā | i’lā-i,sän) is Latin for “Lord, have mercy.” This is the beggars cry. It reminds us that we are here not to give something to God, but to receive something from God in Christ. We come as beggars with empty hands, and as our Lord, Jesus hears the cry of troubled lives. When you pray this song, think of the distresses that have come upon this world, something in the news, something in the church, something in your life. This together with the Gloria in Excelsis are among the earliest songs of the New Testament Church.

The Gloria in Excelsis (ik'selsis) that follows is Latin for “Glory to God in the Highest.” You should think of this as the song of heaven on earth. The glory of God is not about us rising to heaven, but heaven descending to us in Christ Jesus. When God descended among us in the flesh of Jesus, heaven was found on earth. Angels appeared among the shepherds singing: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good

will toward men!" In the same way, we gather together in the presence of Christ and all his heavenly hosts. So the book of Hebrews says,

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22–24)

This is a wonder and a mystery – that Christ who has ascended far above the heavens would make His home among us on earth. Together with all the angels and all believers who have died in the faith, we join the song of heaven and earth...

KYRIE ~ Lord, Have Mercy

Mark 10:47

C: Lord, have mer - cy on us. Christ, have mer - cy
on us. Lord, have mer - cy on us.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS ~ Glory to God in the Highest Luke 2:14; Revelation 5:8-14

C: 1 Glo - ry to God, we give You thanks and praise;
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, the Fa - ther's on - ly Son,
3 A - lone, O Christ, You on - ly are the Lord,
Of heav'n - ly joy and peace on earth we sing.
You bore for us the load of this world's sin.
At God's right hand in maj - es - ty most high:
We wor - ship You, to You our hearts we raise,
O Lamb of God, Your glo - rious vic - t'ry won,
Who, with the Spir - it wor - shiped and a - dored,
Lord God, al - might - y Fa - ther, heav'n - ly King.
Re - ceive our prayer, grant us Your peace with - in.
With all the heav'n - ly host we glo - ri - fy.

THE SALUTATION AND THE COLLECT

Throughout the Liturgy we see transitions. Here in the Salutation we find the first transition as we move from lifting up songs of praise to prayerfully receiving the Word of God. When the pastor says, “the Lord be with you,” is more than “hello.” This is a call for God’s presence in Christ to be with the congregation. The congregation responds by praying that Christ would also be with the minister as he mediates this relationship between God and the congregation. In mediating this relationship, he offers a prayer on behalf of the congregation. We call this “the collect” because it is meant to collect the thoughts of the day or of the season. The collect prepares us to hearing the Word and meditate on the central thoughts of the day.

Here we can recognize why the pastor turning back and forth between the people and the altar. The pastor’s posture is meant to symbolize that relationship. When he faces the congregation he is acting on behalf of God toward the people. When he faces the altar, he is acting together with the congregation toward God. This again reflects our belief that Christ is really present in the word and in the congregation.

THE SALUTATION

M The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

COLLECT OF THE DAY

M Let us pray, Blessed Lord, You have caused all Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and every hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever,

C **Amen**

3. Our Lord is Present in Word

Faith comes by hearing

THE EPISTLE, GRADUAL, AND GOSPEL

The hearing of God’s Word is central to all we do in worship and forms the basis for all we believe and confess. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Christ Jesus is the Word made flesh, and here he meets with us to

proclaim forgiveness, grant us His Holy Spirit, and encourage us in God's will. The Scripture readings we use have been assembled in a series spread throughout the church year. This is called a lectionary. A lectionary suggests a series of readings from an Old Testament text, an Epistle text, and a Gospel text designed to fit the specific time or rhythm of the Church season. We are currently using a three-year rotation. Each Sunday focuses on a particular thought or teaching, usually drawn from the Gospel text. The Gospel text is meant to be the highest point in the service of the word where we hear the words and works of our Lord in human flesh. This leads us into our sermon where we meditate on the thoughts of one or more of these texts.

Here we are Jacob, receiving His word with open ears and contrite hearts. With Jacob we respond in awe and praise. We sing: "Alleluia!" – a Hebrew word which means "Praise the LORD!" This together with the passage from John 20, reminds us that these Scriptures were given for one central purpose: so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and have eternal life in Him.

FIRST LESSON

[the Epistle or Old Testament for the day is read]

PSALM OF THE DAY

[the Psalm of the day is read responsively]

GOSPEL LESSON

[the Gospel for the day is read]

RESPONSIVE VERSE

M Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it. *Luke 11:28*

C: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

These words are writ - ten that we may be-lieve that

Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

John 20:31

THE CREED

The word "Creed" is Latin meaning "I believe." In Romans Paul writes, "with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9). The presence of God's Spirit in His word creates a faith that believes and confesses the truth of God's salvation in Christ. There are three general creeds of the Christian Church, the oldest being the Apostles' Creed, dating back to the 2nd century. These are a faithful expression of true God and the faith that saves. We join with the saints in heaven and those on earth as we confess to one another and before the world the true Christian faith.

CREED ~ The Nicene Creed

**C I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth
 and of all things visible and invisible.
 And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of His Father before all worlds,
 God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,
 begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
 by Whom all things were made;
 Who for us men and for our salvation,
 came down from heaven
 and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
 and was made man;
 and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.**

He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again
according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven
and sits on the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge
both the living and the dead,
Whose kingdom will have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together
is worshiped and glorified,
Who spoke by the Prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
And I look for the resurrection of the dead
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN, SERMON, AND OFFERTORY

Luther once said, "Next to the word of God, music is the greatest gift God has given us." The hymns we sing are designed to accompany and enhance the service of the Word. Hymns unite a congregation in the Word. Faithful hymns will proclaim God's works and exhort one another in the truth of God's word. A consistent collection of faithful hymns instills in us and our children the values and comfort of God that we hold dear. Many a Christian has spoken from their death bed of the comfort of being able to remember and recite the hymns they learned as a child. So Paul writes in Colossians 3:16, "Let Christ dwell among you in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord."

HYMN

SERMON

[Christ is proclaimed as His word is applied to our heads, our hearts, and our lives.]

The devil is constantly condemning and confusing us. The sermon enters into this temptation by proclaiming the truth of God in both law and gospel. In the sermon, the pastor preaches. That is to say, this is not a lecture or a motivational speech, but rather it is proclamation. To preach is to proclaim Christ to the hearts and lives of the people in the congregation. The purpose of preaching is to deliver a good conscience to

the congregation by rightly informing them about sin and righteousness through the Law and apply God's forgiveness through the Gospel. This is not merely about addressing the intellect, but it is about addressing the heart so that God's work in Christ becomes personally relevant to their daily lives. This silences Satan and encourages us to rightly represent God in love and service to our neighbor in our daily vocations.

The pastor concludes the sermon and gives you the promise of Philippians 4:7, assuring you that the peace of God in Christ Jesus will never leave you. To this we respond in with the prayer of David from Psalm 51. David has met with the prophet Nathan who exposes David's his sins of adultery and murder. Hearing David's repentance, Nathan shares the consolation of the gospel. We join David in praying for God continue to dwell with us through His Spirit, restoring us to the joyful life we have been given through Christ for us and in us. The service continues to follow the rhythm of receiving and responding.

M The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

OFFERTORY

Psalm 51:10-12

C: Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -
 new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me
 not a - way from Your pres - ence. Take not Your Ho - ly
 Spir - it from me. Re - store to me the joy of
 Your sal - va - tion. Up - hold with Your Spir - it free.

HYMN

4. Our Lord is Present Interceding and Accepting

Offering ourselves and our prayers

THE THANK OFFERING AND PETITIONS

God certainly doesn't need our money or our works. What He wants is our heart as is revealed in our service toward our neighbor. God has set us free from the debt of the law, so that we might be His own and serve Him in righteousness and joy. We should no longer give "grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Our offerings express our thanks for what we've been given in His word and forgiveness and these gifts become an outward expression of an inward love and trust we have for God. All that we have is from above and God gives us daily bread so that we might support our families, work of His ministry among us and throughout our brethren in the CLC, and to reach out to the underprivileged. So the writer to the Hebrews says: *But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:16)*

In that same spirit of humility, we bring our requests to the throne of God. We remember our own needs, the needs of the greater body of Christ, and the needs of the world. God has exhorted us in 1 Timothy that prayers and intercessions be made for all people, especially those in authority and government, that we might live a godly and peaceful life. In our general prayer we include those petitions which our Lord taught us in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), that we might battle the spiritual warfare in the Christian life.

GATHERING OF OUR THANK OFFERING

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen!

5. Our Lord is Present in Meal
The Service of the Sacrament

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

Dating all the way back to the Old Testament Passover Seder, the worship of God's people has followed this simple pattern: Word and Meal. In the Old Testament it was seen in the Passover Seder where the recounting of the exodus from Egypt would be followed by the eating of the sacrificial lamb. So also, in our worship today, the word is followed by meal in an even greater and more significant way.

The Word has prepared the way for the consummation of our Lord's coming. It is in the Service of the Sacrament where this Word made flesh now gives Himself to us in Meal. This is the stairway of Jacob's dream with angels ascending and descending. This is the approach to the heavenly Jerusalem; a joining together of heaven and earth in Christ; a celebration of Christ's resurrection victory. We now draw near to the Most Holy Place with honest hearts as our resurrected Lord comes to us and offers us His body and blood in bread and wine.

It is always important to prepare yourself for this event. As Scripture says, examine yourself. This can be done the night before or the morning of by reading from the catechism or reading a psalm, thinking upon past sins, and asking the Lord to bring you His body and blood for forgiveness. When you leave the Lord's altar it is also good practice to offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving and for strength.

Our liturgy helps prepare us to rightly receive this gift also. We now exchange a prayer for the Lord's presence to be with us as we lift our hearts to the Lord in faith and thanksgiving. When Jesus broke bread with his disciples he gave thanks to God. With that same spirit of thanksgiving and praise we celebrate the Lord's resurrection together with the whole host of heaven.

We join angels and archangels in singing the song of heaven from Isaiah 6. In Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah sees a vision of heaven and hears the angelic host proclaim, "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus," which is translated: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts ('sabaoth' in some hymns). Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

Along with the song of heaven comes the song of earth. Together with this heavenly chorus, God's people sing words of Psalm 118. Picture here, the Palm Sunday process where Christ approaches Jerusalem as seated on a donkey. Picture yourself, joining this Messianic event, shouting "Hosanna!" – that is to say, "Save now!" Here we are calling upon the Blessed One for salvation. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. In other words, blessed is Jesus, the King of kings, who comes to us both in the lowliness of bread and wine, and also in the glory of His resurrected victory. With these same words of Isaiah 6 and Psalm 118, we approach the heavenly Jerusalem; we

join the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven; we welcome our Blessed Savior who comes to earth in bread and wine and word.

M The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**


M Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them up to the Lord.**

M It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, who with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, one Lord. And in the confession of the only true God we worship the Trinity in Person, in Unity of Substance, for whom Majesty is One. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we praise and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS ~ Holy, Holy, Holy

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



C: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of Sa - ba - oth, a - dored; Heav'n and
earth with full ac - claim shout the glo - ry of Your name. Sing ho -
san - na in the high - est, sing ho - san - na to the Lord; Tru - ly
blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Sabaoth (SAH-bay-oath) is Hebrew for "heavenly host."
Hosanna is a Hebrew word of adoration for "save us now."

We now hear our Lord's living memorial as the Word brings us His living promise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Matt. 26, Mk 14, Lk 22, 1 Cor. 11

M Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and, when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples saying, 'Take, eat. This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup, after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, 'Drink of it, all of you. This cup

is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’

Through this heavenly entrance of Christ our King, peace is made between earth and heaven, between the creation and the Creator. We ask this peace to be with us now and forever as we now call upon our peacemaker – the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Hear the words of John the baptist as he cries out: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

So we pray to the “Agnus Dei,” meaning, “Lamb of God.” This is the culmination of the all holy Scripture, the Divine Service, and the Feast of God in the New Creation. The one sacrificed by God Himself to bring us mercy has risen and now is present offering His body and blood in bread and wine. Yet no longer merely the Lamb who was Slain, this is the Lamb described in Revelation 5 – the Lamb who stands victorious; who lives and reigns; and around whom gather thousand upon thousand of the heavenly host. With the words of institution, we invoke our Lord’s living memorial, receiving His mercy and peace in Holy Communion.

PAX DOMINI

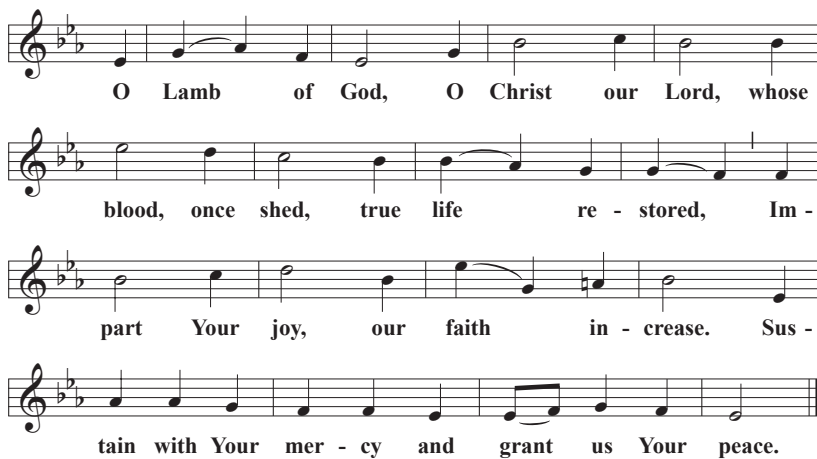
John 20:19

M The peace of the Lord be with you always!

C Amen.

AGNUS DEI ~ Lamb of God

John 1:29



O Lamb of God, O Christ our Lord, whose
blood, once shed, true life re - stored, Im -
part Your joy, our faith in - crease. Sus -
tain with Your mer - cy and grant us Your peace.

DISTRIBUTION

M Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins. Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins. Now may this true body and true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting. Go in peace.

6. Blessed with God's Presence, We Depart in Peace

Concluding blessing of the Word

The Nunc Dimittis, meaning, "let us now depart," comes the song of Simeon from Luke 2. Upon seeing and holding the baby Jesus in his own arms, Simeon says, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace as You have promised, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before all peoples." This is our departing song. In bread and wine, we too have handled and touched this gift of God. We, by faith, have seen, heard, and tasted God's salvation. We depart in peace, fearing not even death itself. For this, we offer a song of thanksgiving and pray for God to go with us in the journey ahead.

NUNC DIMITTIS ~ Now Let Us Depart (Song of Simeon) *Luke 2:29-32*



C: 1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All
part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the
glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace: A
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three - in - One; For
light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -
as in the be - gin - ning, Is
to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -
peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

THANKSGIVING

Luke 7:50; Psalm 100:2

M Go in peace. Serve the Lord with gladness.

C: My heart has now be - come Your dwell - ing, O bless - ed,
 ho - ly Trin - i - ty. With an - gels I, Your prais - es
 tell - ing, Shall live in joy e - ter - nal - ly. Lord, may Your
 bod - y and Your blood Be for my soul the high - est good!

Jacob received a vision of heaven, but we know he eventually had to wake up. God needed Jacob to keep going. He sent him forth with His promise and blessing so that he might become a blessing to others.

This is what God is also giving to you in the benediction. The benediction reiterates the blessing God first bestowed on His people through the High Priest Aaron in Numbers 6:24-26. The benediction empowers you to go forth into the world with a good conscience and with love for those around you. Having received Christ in word and sacrament, you are a New Creation. You go forth as a representative God’s promise of restoration to the world, bearing His image and showing forth His glory by faith in Christ Jesus. Your life is far from heavenly; but that is just the way it must be. God needs you here on earth. You return into daily conflicts and temptations, into family troubles and tough marriages, into the stress of work and demands of a busy world, into a world so desperately in need of Christ – as light bearers, you go into a dark world. He sends you forth into the world as His servant, promising to go with you, distributing His blessings through you, and bringing you back safely to the promised land, the resurrection of your body, the New Creation.

What more can we say but to say: Amen. What more can we do than to express our confidence in God’s promise by saying: “This is most certainly true.”

BENEDICTION

Numbers 6:24-26

M The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

C Amen.

If there is one thing that stands out most about the Lutheran Liturgy, it is the prominence of Scripture in our worship. The word of God what we value above all else. With this in mind, worship becomes not about something done by us, but something received from God.

Leave with the blessing of God in Christ. Leave a cleansed and declared right with God. Leave a saint. For from baptism, from the word, from the body and blood of Christ, you are holy. May you leave with a better appreciation for what God is doing in this service of the Word and Sacrament. May you leave with greater confidence to approach God in prayer and praise and be emboldened to serve others as you take Christ with you into the world. In other words, we pray that the Spirit has revealed to you that through Word and Sacrament you have been granted "ACCESS TO GOD'S HOLY PRESENCE AND BLESSING IN CHRIST JESUS."

CLOSING HYMN

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