

AN EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP
AND
THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE LUTHERAN SERVICE

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By Edward Arthur Naumann

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The purpose of this booklet is to answer the question that everyone who believes in Jesus should have. “Now that we believe, how should we practice our faith?” Christians believe in God with their hearts, but they put faith into practice with their lips, as they confess what they believe, and call upon the name of God for salvation. We do this both privately in our homes, and communally when we gather as a church every week and on special occasions.

The evangelical Lutheran church has a tradition of services, rites and ceremonies that are used to guide and facilitate believers in practicing their faith in a way that is pleasing to God. Lutherans do not assert that there is only one right way or one correct form of worship. Indeed, there are many differences even between the way Lutherans practice their faith throughout the world. Lutheran traditions do, however, come from a desire to do everything in agreement with the teachings of the Bible, and this is a very healthy approach. When we ask the question “How should we practice our faith?” we must receive our guidance not from mere human traditions, but primarily from the Word of God.

By using a biblical perspective to approach the question of how to practice our faith, we are asking more than simply “How do we worship?” We are asking specifically, “What does *the Bible* say is pleasing or displeasing to God, about the ways men worship Him?” “What instructions did *God* give His people about how to practice their faith?” “How does *Jesus* say we should pray?” “What positive examples do we find *in the Bible* of prayers, worship, and living as Christians?” “How does the *Holy Spirit* through the apostles approve or correct the practices of the earliest Christian churches?”

When we ask such questions, we are effectively looking for the biblical foundations for the historic practices that continue today. Church history or tradition is not, by itself, a good enough reason for why we should continue any practice. Lutherans know this very well, who made significant reforms to church practices in the sixteenth century – including some very old practices – with the goal of eliminating anything that was contrary to Scripture and the Christian faith.

The guiding principles for traditions, customs, rites and ceremonies in the Church, as the Lutheran reformers wrote in their confessions, may be summarized as follows:

- (1) All ceremonies that were instituted by God must be maintained.
- (2) Christians may observe other rites if they do not require us to sin.
- (3) Customs can be established in the Church if they are useful for peace and good order.
- (4) Customs should not be changed without a good reason.
- (5) Ceremonies cannot be performed as if they are necessary for salvation, or as if they merit the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins.
- (6) Ceremonies are (or can and should be) useful for instruction, to teach Christ.
- (7) Uniformity of ceremonies everywhere is not essential to ecclesiastical unity.¹

That these principles of the Reformation are themselves founded securely in scripture is demonstrated sufficiently in those confessional documents where they appear. For us to demonstrate the scriptural foundation here, we could easily point, for example, to Jesus' prayer for the unity of His Church in John 17; to Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians where he opposes the teaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation; to the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, where the early Church established laws for the sake of peace and unity; and so on. Without further delay, however, let us begin to consider the practices of the Lutheran church, and their biblical foundations.

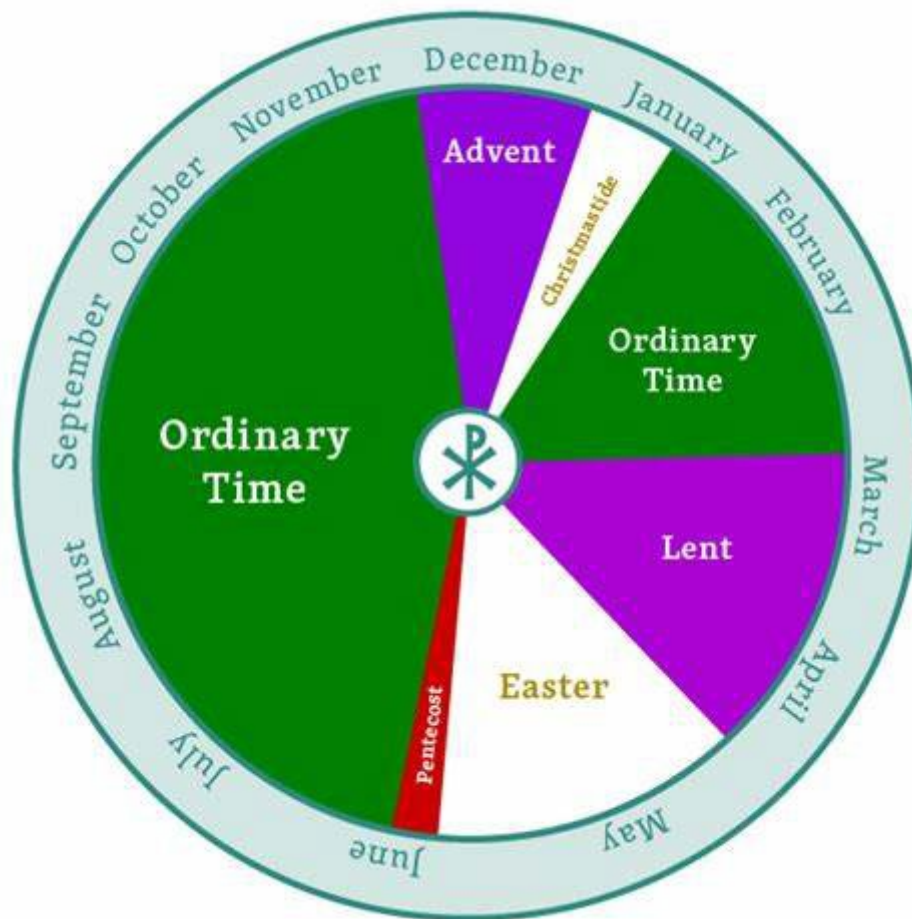
The Church Year

One of the first things that most people learn about Christianity is that we have two main festivals during the year: Easter and Christmas. Even many non-Christians also celebrate these festivals, without knowing much more about Christianity. In fact, Easter and Christmas are part of a much more structured Church year, which we call the liturgical calendar.

During the year, there are liturgical 'seasons', in which the Church remembers different events during the life of Christ, and the various teachings of the Lord, which are recorded for us in the Gospels. The Church year begins in Advent, which begins four Sundays before Christmas. Christmas is always observed on December 25. Then there are twelve days of Christmas before Epiphany, which always falls on January 6. Unlike the fixed date for Christmas, the date of Easter changes, to correspond approximately to the

¹ See *Augsburg Confession* XXIV.2; XXVI.40; *Apology* XIII (VII).2; XV (VIII).1, and 51.

time of the Jewish Passover, because it was at the Passover that Jesus was crucified and rose from the grave. The season of Lent comes in the forty days before Easter Sunday. After Easter Day is the season of Easter, until Pentecost, which comes 50 days after Easter. Trinity Sunday is observed the week after Pentecost. The season of Pentecost, which is also called the Trinity season, lasts until the end of the liturgical year, that is, until the first Sunday of Advent. We can represent the Church year with a picture like this:



What is the significance of the seasons of the Church year, in summary?

- Advent, which means 'coming', focuses on the two Advents of Christ: His first coming in humility, and His second coming in glory, on the last day.
- Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ and the purpose of His incarnation, to take away the sin of the world.
- Epiphany, which means 'revealing', celebrates how Jesus' divinity was revealed to the world, especially at the visit of the magi, at His baptism in the Jordan River, through His miracles, and at the Transfiguration.

- Lent remembers the forty days of Jesus' fasting and temptation in the wilderness, which spiritually represents the journey of every Christian through this life. Lent has traditionally been the season in which all Christians emphasize repentance, through fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, in preparation for Easter. The last week of Lent is 'Holy Week' when Jesus' sufferings and death are remembered in a number of special services.
- Easter, the 'Paschal Feast', is the highest Christian festival of the year, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. The Easter season readings concern Jesus' resurrection.
- Pentecost, meaning 'fifty', commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Jerusalem.
- Trinity Sunday exists to teach the mystery of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, who are united as one God. The remainder of the Trinity teaches all of Jesus' teachings and miracles from the Gospels. We call this the 'Time of the Church' or 'Ordinary Time' because we count the Sundays after Trinity by numbers (ordinals), 'First Sunday after Trinity', etc.

Is it necessary to keep a liturgical calendar?

Some Christians object that the Bible does not require us to observe these seasons and feast days, and they say that churches are sinning against God when they demand that everyone should observe these seasons and festivals. How should we answer such an assertion?

First, we must assert that we teach clearly that the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins are given freely for the sake of Christ. Therefore, we observe the liturgical calendar not out of compulsion, but because we are free in Christ to do so, and because it is beneficial for us. We do not teach that Scripture requires us to keep this calendar, or that this calendar is necessary for salvation, or that it merits grace from God or the forgiveness of sins. Rather, it is a good and orderly way to fulfill the general command Jesus gave his disciples, to teach all that He had commanded; and to feed his sheep. (Mt. 28; Jn. 21)

To show that keeping a liturgical calendar is pleasing to God, we may also point out that the first liturgical calendar was not invented by the Church, but was commanded by God himself, who required the people of Israel to observe certain festivals.

- Read Exodus 12: God commanded His people to observe feast of the Passover, together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- Read Leviticus 23: God summarizes all the festivals that He wanted His people to observe throughout the year, including the weekly Sabbath Day, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First fruits, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Holy Convocation.

The divinely instituted liturgical calendar of the Old Testament does not demonstrate any *necessity* that we should do the same in the Church, but it certainly shows that we may without sin observe our own calendar.

Why should the Church have a liturgical calendar like the calendar of the Old Testament?

Again, the liturgical calendar is not necessary, but it is useful and beneficial, for many reasons.

Most importantly, the purpose of the Christian calendar is the same as it was for the Old Testament, in summary, to point to Christ. Jesus tells us that everything that the Lord revealed in the Old Testament speaks about Him, and rebuked those who failed to understand the purpose of the Law of Moses (Jn. 5:45-46): “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.” The Old Testament calendar is fulfilled in Christ, which is why it is no longer necessary for Christians to observe it. The *Christian* liturgical calendar continues the same divine intention, which is not merely to observe feasts and seasons, but to point continually to Christ.

Having a liturgical calendar also enables the Church to observe set readings for each Sunday of the year.

Why does the Church use specific Scripture readings for each Sunday?

The reason for this is also to be found in Scripture, which directs us to remember *all* of God’s marvelous works, and to teach *all* of God’s counsel for our salvation.

Thus it is written, “Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!” Psalm 105:2. Having different Bible readings each week enables and *requires* the Church to consider all the works of God, most especially in the life of Jesus Christ. The Church’s focus on Christ, moreover, does not neglect to remember the works of God in the Old Testament, but these works are celebrated in light of how they point to our salvation in Christ, who is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures.

Jesus commanded His disciples to teach the world to obey everything that He had commanded them. (Mt. 28:19-20) The importance of having not only a part, but the fulness of the Gospel is seen in the New Testament many times. Scripture is useful for

teaching and correcting those whose faith is still lacking. The disciples in Ephesus, for example, did not understand who the Holy Spirit was, and were instructed. (Acts 5:1-7) The entire letter to the Galatians was written to correct the churches who had been led astray by false teachers.

The appointed readings *ensure* that the Church in every place does not omit teachings that may be inconvenient or divisive, but unashamedly teaches everything that Jesus revealed to us, so that we may hear and believe all of God's Word.

Sunday Worship

Why do Christians gather on Sundays?

Christians have been gathering on the first day of the week (Sunday) since the time of the apostles, who regularly came together to break bread (a reference to the Lord's Supper) on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7) St. Paul instructed the Corinthians and the Galatians to take a collection on the first day of the week, because that is the day they gathered. (1 Cor. 16:1-2)

Many people wrongly suppose that the Church continued to worship on the seventh day (the Sabbath day), and only changed the day of worship many centuries later, but the New Testament tells us that this change already took place in the time of the apostles.

Why do Christians gather on Sunday instead of the Sabbath day?

The divine Law states: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Ex. 20:8) This commandment is both moral and ceremonial. The ceremonial aspect requires that the day should be observed specifically on the seventh day, for this reason: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." (Ex. 20:11)

The Sabbath rest points forward spiritually to the rest that awaits the saints, as they make their journey in faith towards heaven. This is written in Hebrews 4:9-10: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." The ceremonial aspect of this commandment is fulfilled in Christ, therefore believers are free to worship God on any day. The first day of the week is generally preferred, because it is the day Jesus rose from the grave. (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1) Nevertheless the moral force of the commandment remains.

Do Christians need to gather, or can we worship God privately?

The Christian practice of gathering to worship has its roots in the Old Testament, as we have seen in Exodus 20 and Leviticus 23. God commanded His people to remember the Sabbath, not only to rest but also to *congregate for a sacred assembly*.

Obedying God's commandment to remember the Sabbath is not only good for us, since it is good for us to rest one day a week, but it is also morally necessary, to sanctify the day with prayer and God's Word and Sacrament. Those who love God must gather to worship Him, as Psalm 111:1 says: "Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation." But those who refuse to come and worship Him sin gravely, like unbelievers: "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful." (Rom. 1:21)

In addition, Christians show love for each other by encouraging one another when they gather. To those who stop coming to church, Scripture says, in Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

What kinds of worship services are there?

The Divine Service is the name of the chief worship service, where gathered believers partake of the Sacrament of the Altar. In addition to the Divine Service, there are other services for daily use, or for use when an ordained pastor is not available to lead the service. Our primary concern is to understand the Divine Service.

What are the main elements of the Divine Service?

The Divine Service contains two kinds of elements: **sacramental**, and **sacrificial**. We can define these elements as follows:

In the **sacramental** elements of worship, God speaks to us. God reveals His Word to us. God shows us His grace. God gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation. God strengthens our faith by His Spirit.

The sacramental parts of the service include:

- The Absolution
- Scripture readings
- The Sermon
- The Lord's Supper

- The blessings

In the **sacrificial** elements, we speak to God. We confess our sins. We offer Him our praise, worship and thanksgiving. We sacrifice our hearts in repentance, and we give Him a portion of the material goods we have received from Him.

The sacrificial parts of the service include:

- The Confession of Sins
- Prayers
- Hymns and canticles
- The Creed
- The Offering

Some parts of the service can be both sacramental and sacrificial, especially when we are singing or praying the words of Scripture; then as we are speaking or singing, God is still instructing and guiding us through His Word.

Generally, you can tell which parts of the service are sacramental or sacrificial by looking at what direction the pastor is facing. The pastor faces the front of the church for the sacrificial parts, and he faces the people for the sacramental parts.

Is the Christian Service all about what we do for God?

Not at all! Although Christian services are often called ‘Worship’ or a ‘Worship Service’, this is only *part* of the reason God wants us to get together.

Certainly, we ought to praise and worship God because of all that He has done for us. The Psalms especially exhort us frequently to do this. “Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.” (Ps. 30:4) “Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.” (Ps. 95:1) “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” (Ps. 95:6) “Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.” (Ps. 96:9) “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool—He is holy.” (Ps. 99:5) “Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” (Ps. 106:1)

We also come to God, however, because He is our life, and we need to receive from Him constantly and regularly the gifts of His mercy and grace.

Scripture describes in various ways that **we need to receive God’s gifts regularly**. We need to eat spiritually as much as we need physical food. “Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Mt. 4:4) The apostle Peter encourages the Church receive the Word of God like infants, meaning, regularly: “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” (1 Peter 2:2-3)

Again, Christ our Good Shepherd nourishes His flock by feeding us with His Holy Word – with Himself, who is the bread of life. “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who *feeds on Me* will live because of Me.” (Jn. 6:57; see also Jn. 6:22-58) So Jesus commanded His apostles to feed His flock, saying to Peter, “Feed my lambs”, etc. (Jn. 21:15-17)

Regarding the forgiveness of sins, Scripture again clearly teaches that we should receive this from God not just once, but regularly, indeed daily, as Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s prayer, which He clearly wants us to pray every day. (Mt. 6:9-13, Lk. 11:2-4) He authorized His apostles and ministers to forgive people their sins on his behalf (Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:22-23), so that the people of God could receive God’s forgiveness often.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn. 1:8-9)

As we look in greater detail at the various parts of the service, we will see how the individual components of the Divine Service are pleasing to God and a necessary part of the life of the Christian Church.

Are some worship services a false kind of worship?

Yes. There is a right way and a wrong way to understand the Divine Service. There is true worship and false worship, and sadly many Christians have gone astray from what the Bible teaches us about what is pleasing to God.

Many people think that by coming to church they are doing God a favor, or somehow earning their place in heaven by the good work of going to church and giving an offering or making a sacrifice. Such people still do not understand and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is not about *earning salvation* by works, by *being saved* by God’s grace. Some people go to church because they desire to see entertainment or to see miracles. Some people go because they want to feel good. Some people go because they want to change the world and transform their society and culture. Whatever the reasons people go to church, if the grace of God is missing, then the worship of God is false.

False worship, in other words, is found not only when people worship false gods, which is idolatry; false worship is also found when people worship God without saving faith.

People who worship God without believing His Word are either wicked or hypocrites. Jesus prophesied about the days in which we live: "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." (Mt. 24:11. See also Mk. 13:22; and all of 2 Peter 2) Therefore He warns us, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Mt. 7:15) Jesus requires us to be careful not to be deceived and led astray by false teachings. We should always live wisely and search the Scriptures to find out what is the will of God. (Acts 17:11; Eph. 5:15-17) For false teachings and false gospels will also result in false worship.

We should not be surprised or discouraged by the fact that many people do not understand the purpose of the sacred assembly. Jesus told us that these things would take place. If we are able, we should teach and restore such people to a correct understanding of the purpose of the Christian service. For this is the correct use of God's Word. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

History of the Divine Service

Why is the history of the Divine Service important?

The history of the Divine Service is important, for several reasons.

1. The historical background demonstrates that Lutheran worship is not schismatic. The Lutheran Church does not delight in being distinct and separate from other Christian denominations. To the contrary, the Lutheran Church is always striving towards unity, and the history of this service proves our desire for ever increased unity in the Church.
2. The historical background helps us understand the origins of individual parts of the service, giving us confidence that they do have orthodox Christian origins, and removing any suspicion of unsalutary influences.
3. The historical background explains why some elements of the service were removed from the Roman rite that came before, and why we should be confident that the remaining elements are good and salutary.
4. The history helps us understand the general *purpose* of the form that exists today: to guide believers to a right understanding and expression of their faith in God and in His Word.

How did we get the Divine Service that we have today?

Not all Lutherans use exactly the same form of service, but most are very similar. The form of the Divine Service that we use today was first published in the late nineteenth century, but represents a typical Lutheran service of the sixteenth century.

Our Divine Service was called the ‘Common Service’ at the time of its publication. The ‘Common Service’ was the result of a desire in North America to have unified practice among Lutherans who were united in doctrine but were using a variety of different yet similar services. The committee of scholars who were responsible for preparing the Common Service intentionally sought to represent “The Common Consent of the Pure Lutheran Liturgies of the Sixteenth Century”.

In the sixteenth century, as a result of the Reformation, which restored the teachings of Scripture, the liturgy of the Divine Service had also been reformed. The most important changes that the Lutherans made to the Roman liturgy were:

- Translating everything into the language of the people, including the liturgy, prayers, and Scripture readings.
- Reintroducing hymns and singing, for the people.

- Assigning greater importance to the sermon.
- Understanding the Lord's Supper as a sacrament, not a sacrifice.
- Removal of unscriptural elements and traditions, such as prayers to saints and prayers for the dead.

The Lutherans made these changes to ensure that the pure Gospel was proclaimed throughout the service: to eliminate the teaching that man is saved in whole or in part by his own works, and to promote the Truth that man is saved purely by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The reformed evangelical service therefore functioned as a teaching and guiding instrument both for pastors and for the people. It protected the Church from false teaching, by *guiding the hearts of believers to do everything in a manner consistent with the Gospel*. The Lutheran service, however, was not the same in every place; rather each territory or district adopted its own form. The Lutherans made use of this freedom, because they understood that uniformity in all matters was not necessary for the unity of the Church.

Before the Reformation, there had been many forms of the Divine Service, and it had never been considered necessary for all Christians to follow one form. Throughout the Early Christian (first to seventh century) and Medieval (seventh to sixteenth century) eras, the Church followed regional forms, different in each province or country, depending on what was approved in each place.

The service of Holy Communion, however, whatever its regional form, has always been distinct from other services, in several ways. The service of Holy Communion:

1. Was celebrated throughout the world on Sundays and special feast days.
2. Was the most stable service, as the focal point of Christian communal worship, and changed the least over the years.
3. The communion service is the oldest Christian service, which is traced back to the time of the first believers, who devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42)

The Divine Service as Spiritual Journey

In every Divine Service, the Christian is guided through a spiritual journey, in which the sacrificial and sacramental elements are combined, in keeping with the teachings of Scripture, to ensure that the believer first approaches God rightly, and subsequently is

lifted up, edified and strengthened by the grace and mercy of God, before he goes back to his home. Wilhelm Loehe, a Lutheran pastor in Germany in the nineteenth century, described the service in a manner that is worthy of our meditation, as follows:²

“A close examination of this liturgy must convince everyone that it is constructed on that which is fundamentally necessary for the right conduct of public worship.

In Public worship the Church experiences a special nearness to God; she approaches into the very presence of the Bridegroom, and tastes the blessedness of Heaven even here below. Public worship is the prettiest flower that can bloom on human stems. The ‘Order’ or ‘Liturgy’ in which this worship is expressed ought therefore to be the image of the inner unity and harmony of the spiritual life – an ecclesial aesthetic in concrete form. In the Church’s inner life, as well as in the public expression of her worship, Word and Sacrament constitute the center. Like waves of the sea, breaking and falling upon the rocks, the various forms of the Liturgy must be determined by this central point; they cannot be arbitrarily chosen, but must be ordered and arranged according to the relation which they bear to Word and Sacrament. This center determines the steps in the Plan of Salvation, and this in turn determines the Order of public worship.

The arrangement of the parts in the Order for the Chief Service on the Lord’s day may be compared to a twin mountain, one of whose heights is a little lower than the other. The former of these heights, and the lower, is the sermon; and the other, and the higher, is the Sacrament of the Altar, without the celebration of which no public worship is complete. In public worship the soul is engaged in an ascent, the goal of which is reached at the table of the Lord. There is nothing higher – nothing more divine on earth; only Heaven remains above. In the Holy Supper the deepest longings of the soul are satisfied, as the humble worshiper joyfully declares in the Nunc Dimittis.

I shall now examine the meaning and place of the particular parts of this Liturgy.

The Christian desires to draw near to God in humble, acceptable worship. He comes, in company with his fellow Christians, from the conflicts of the past week, bearing on his heart the burdens of many defeats and the joys of few victories. He knows that in spite of his best efforts, his conduct has not been wholly pleasing to God. Before him lies now a new week with its thousand hopes and fears; and before he dares enter upon this new week, he must hold communion with God his heavenly Father. But how shall he approach his God who dwells in unapproachable light? First of all, he must be pardoned of his sins, and be made aware of such pardon. For this purpose, there is no form better adapted than that given in this Liturgy for

² Quoted, with light editing, from Wilhelm Loehe, *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith*, trans. F. C. Longaker (Newport, KY: 1902), xi-xvi.

Confession and Absolution. The Confiteor ('I confess') is therefore the first part of a normal Order for public worship.

In the Confession and Absolution, the soul has been delivered from the burdens of past defeats and is now prepared to take a further step in its approach to God. The worshipper is now prepared to enter upon the meaning and character of the particular day, which are announced to him in the Introit. To the peace, experienced in hearing the Absolution, are thus added the joys of the particular festival. The Introit distinguishes one Lord's Day from another, e.g. Easter from Whitsunday, or Trinity, or some other holy day.

Being cleansed from sin and having entered upon the peculiar joys of the particular festival, the worshiper finds that earth has still other burdens and sorrows which prove a present and future hindrance to holiness. Life, death and eternity, upon each of which sin has cast its dark shadow, are things well able to make the soul tremble whenever it contemplates them. To be cleansed from the sins of the past week is no assurance of immunity from failure for the next. Therefore, the Kyrie ('Lord, have mercy!'), comprehending in spite of its brevity, a prayer for temporal and eternal deliverance, comes next in the Order.

In the Confiteor and Kyrie, the congregation approached God, conscious of the need of pardon. The people stood much in the same relation to God in these acts as humanity did before the advent of Christ. And as the Lord first came to his people in the chorus of angels, so does He now make his first approach to the worshiping congregation in the lofty strains of the Gloria in Excelsis ('Glory to God in the highest'). He has come, but so far He is still silent; but the light of his countenance shines upon his people, and his ear is open to their prayers. Once more, therefore, the congregation frames all its needs into a single petition, and unitedly presents it to the divine Throne in the Collect (Prayer of the day); and in clear comprehension of the common need of all, the people answer with a believing 'Amen'.

Up to this point the Lord has been silent, but now He speaks, and it becomes all flesh to be silent before Him. He grants the people the grace of his Word, but first in the apostolic writings. For this grace the people express their praise in the Hallelujah and Gradual. But the Lord speaks again, this time his very own words, in the Gospel. The Holy One is coming ever nearer to his own, and they answer Him with a joyful 'Praise to Thee, O Christ!'.

But further: The hearts of the people are full of faith through the power of the Gospel. The worship has developed to that point in which the congregation is now conscious of its union with the Lord, which it expresses in the Creed. No more the burdens of sin, no more the fear of evil, no more the sighs of longing, but joyful confidence fills every soul. The face of the Highest is unveiled in the Sermon, which in a high sense expresses the communion of the saints, all of whom are glad in the presence of God.

Now the congregation stands on the first height of the Mountain of God, with the face turned still higher, even to the Sacrament.

The worshiping people now know themselves as the Bride of the Lord; their hearts' longings are satisfied in Him and through Him; but not only through Him, also through fellowship with one another; they are the people of God – a unit in their inner life and experience. In the fulness of divine grace they bear in mind the needs of one another, as well as those of the whole world; and humbly wishing each human soul the highest good, they approach the divine Throne in supplication, prayer and intercession. With nothing but blessing for mankind in their hearts, the people are thus fitly preparing themselves for a right approach to the Altar. And along with this great prayer the thought comes to them, that the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven is the One Holy Catholic Church, and that the prayers of the pilgrims here and the prayers of the glorified there, are borne to the Father's Throne by the same Mediator.

From supplication, prayer and intercession the congregation now goes with thanksgiving on to the Preface, even as the Apostle says:--"In everything let your requests be made known with thanksgiving". But the giving of thanks is soon lost in the loftier strains of the Sanctus, in the Trisagion ('Holy, Holy, Holy') of the heavenly hosts. In the Sanctus the worshiping people see the Lord's approach to the Sacrament, and they hail him in prayerful Hosanna. The people can rise no higher; they are as near Heaven as it is possible for a human soul to come on earth.

A brief, but deep and expectant silence now settles on the people.

Without transition the Verba testamenti ('words of the testament') are now heard. He comes in the name of the Lord! God and his Lamb, slain for the sin of the world, are present! Humbled, the congregation lies before the Highest, not indeed as though cast down from the heights of the Sanctus, but by it deeply impressed with the nearness of God, commends to Him in the Agnus Dei ('Lamb of God') and in the Lord's Prayer everything which is necessary for time and eternity.

Now all trembling and fear, awakened anew through the coming of the Lord, gives way to the peace of the Lord, which He himself announces to the guests about to approach his table.

The worshiping congregation now receives the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From faith to faith, from one height to another, the devout soul has gone up to the most blessed experiences of the divine nearness and pardon. The soul can reach no higher station, except in death (Nunc Dimittis). The service closes, and the worshipers, with hope born anew, seek in their daily occupations that which God has given to each as the discipline preparatory to glorification."

Contents of the Divine Service

Hymn of Invocation
 Invocation
 Confession of Sins
Introit or Psalm, with *Gloria Patri*
 Kyrie
Gloria in Excelsis
 Salutation
 Collect of the Day
 Old Testament or First Reading
Gradual
 Epistle or Second Reading
Hallelujah
Sentences for the Seasons
 Gospel Reading
 Nicene or Apostles' Creed
Chief Hymn
 Sermon
Offertory
 General Prayer
Hymn
 Preface
 Proper Preface
Sanctus
 Lord's Prayer
 Words of Institution
 Pax Domini
Agnus Dei
 Distribution
Nunc Dimittis
 Thanksgiving
Hymn
 Salutation and Benedicamus
 Benediction

The arrangement of these components is different in every time and place, but the main components themselves are ancient and unchanging. The main components of the Divine Service are (1) Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual songs, (2) Prayers, (3) Scripture readings and sermon, and (4) The Lord's Supper.

Main Components: (1) Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual Songs

Why do we sing hymns?

Singing hymns is a tradition in the Lutheran Church. The Lutherans reintroduced singing by the congregation. This began with a booklet of eight hymns, published in 1524, four of which were written by Martin Luther himself.

The Lutheran tradition of singing hymns, however, is also firmly grounded in Scripture. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus sang a hymn with his disciples on the night when He was betrayed, indicating that the Lord approves this practice of singing hymns. (Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26) The Lord himself wrote the song of Deuteronomy 32 and commanded the people of Israel to sing it, after He delivered them from their slavery in Egypt. In many places in Scripture, God gives us His inspired words to sing, and gives us the freedom to write our own songs. Indeed, He commands it, saying: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him." (Ps. 98:1) "Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." (Ps. 100:2) "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." (Ps. 40:3) "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving."

Saint Paul likewise encouraged all Christians to sing, writing: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:18-20) Such singing was not limited to the setting of a church, but could be done anywhere. As we read in Acts 16:25, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns even in prison.

Singing, moreover, is clearly pleasing to God because the company of heaven is constantly singing, as Saint John saw in his vision. (See Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:3) In heaven, the will of God is done perfectly, where there is no sin or anything unholy in the presence of God; therefore on earth, where we pray for the will of God to be done as it is in heaven, it is also fitting to sing psalms, hymns, and songs of praise to God.

What is the purpose of hymns?

Scripture directs us not only to the good of singing, but also the purpose of such singing in the context of the Divine Service. We have already seen some of these in the quotations above. In summary, we can say that singing is a way of expressing and amplifying sacred thoughts, sentiments and feelings of the heart.

First, singing in church is done as a way of praying to a musical setting. The congregation sings, therefore, for all the same reasons we pray: (1) to worship, praise and give thanks to God, not abstractly, but specifically for *all of His wondrous works*; (2) to express our lamentation; not generally, but specifically: for our sins, for our being persecuted, and for all other forms of suffering, trial or affliction, on account of our sins or for other reasons (a full third of the Psalter includes such prayers); (3) to ask God for all that we need or desire (petitions) for this life, for deliverance, for protection from evil, assistance against temptation, for the forgiveness of sins, everlasting life, and so on.

Second, hymns are used in the same way as Scripture, to teach and guide us. Saint Paul wrote: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16) This passage gives hymns the same role as Scripture itself. (Compare with 2 Tim 3:16!)

Third, singing declares the works of God to all people, which is an *evangelical* activity. It teaches the Christian faith, by declaring all that God has done for His people. “Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the people.” (Psalm 9:11) Hymns remind those who have heard the works of God before, of all that He has done for them, and they teach others, who have not heard these things before. When Christians sing, we are sharing the Gospel.

What is the style of Christian hymns?

For the reasons above, our hymns are guided by Scripture, and full of the teachings and admonishments of Scripture. Lutheran hymns are substantive, not shallow. The purpose is not to create an emotional experience or to evoke the feeling of being in the presence of God, but to express our prayers (joys, laments, petitions); to educate and guide the people in the Christian faith; and to declare the works of God to all people. Emotion is not lacking in Lutheran hymns, but it is guided by God’s Word.

The style of music is “spiritual” not “carnal”: holy and distinct from what we encounter in the world. Paul instructed Christians to sing as a means of living in the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18-20), in opposition to the ways of the flesh, such as drunkenness and dissipation. He uses the phrase “spiritual songs” to distinguish sacred music, because many forms of secular music led men astray into sins—idolatry, blasphemy, sexual immorality or something else (see Ex. 32:18; Dan. 3:5-7; Mt. 14:6) The style of sacred music for use in the Divine Service is distinct from the many secular forms that are used for other purposes.

Should we limit our songs to the Psalms?

By no means. The Psalms themselves direct us to “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” (Ps. 96:3) Therefore because many of God’s most marvelous deeds were done through Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, there is much more to sing about than is recorded in the Psalms.

The songs of the angels are similarly not limited to the works that God accomplished before Jesus, but include praising the Lamb of God, who has taken away the sins of the world by his death on the cross.

What is the difference between Psalms and Hymns?

Hymns are usually based on one or more passages of Scripture, including Psalms, but are man-made compositions. Hymns have many different purposes, but are generally clear in their teaching and declaration of the works of God, as they encourage the congregation to believe and practice the Christian faith.

Psalms, by contrast, are Scripture, and as such are infallible and inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Psalms, like hymns, have many different purposes. As God’s Word, however, the Psalms often contain truth and wisdom that goes beyond the scope of ordinary hymns. The Psalms are often prophetic, Christological (speaking about Christ or in the person of Christ), and in some way obscure, because they are intended to be understood spiritually. In this way, the use of Psalms during the Divine Service often introduces an element of awe at the mysteries that were hidden from the foundation of the world, which are now revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Col. 1:26-27)

Main Components: (2) Prayers

How is Christian prayer distinct?

(1) Christians pray to the one true God, the Father Son and Holy Spirit, and understand that prayer to any other god is futile and falls on deaf ears.

(2) We understand that our access to God the Father is possible, and that He hears our petitions favorably, only for the sake of the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, and not because of our own works and gifts to Him. Long prayers are not more acceptable because they are longer. Prayers do not earn more of God’s grace when they are more numerous. Nor does God refuse to hear the prayer of the sinner who calls upon His Name for mercy.

(3) We pray to God, with the understanding that He is our *loving* heavenly Father, who has graciously made us His own children through the baptism of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, and made us heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore He invites us to ask Him for all that we need for this body and life.

(4) Our Lord has attached to His command the promise that He will graciously hear us, and grant us all that we ask in the name of Jesus. In other words, we are permitted to ask *unconditionally* for all that we need for our eternal salvation, and He will most certainly grant what we ask, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Should Christians ask the saints to pray for us?

This is a common question. Christians can and should ask other living Christians to pray for them out of love, as St. Paul frequently wrote, "Pray for us". (Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1; Heb. 13:18)

Usually, however, this question is asked not concerning the living saints but concerning those who have died and are now in the company of heaven. When we look to Scripture for the answer, we can find no clear example to follow, or any indication of approval, that we should pray to the saints in glory, or ask for their prayers, or pray for the deceased. Scripture does not even give any clear indication that the departed saints are able to hear the petitions of the saints on earth. Nevertheless, because Scripture does not explicitly forbid prayers to or for the deceased, many people think that such prayers are allowed by God; and indeed because such prayers were permitted and promoted in the Church for many centuries, they seem to be not only permitted but also approved as pious and praiseworthy.

Contrary to this way of thinking, the Lutheran reformers rightly removed prayers to saints from the liturgy, first because all the commands and promises of Scripture concerning prayer, and every salutary example in Scripture, direct us to pray to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, due to the prayers to saints and accompanying veneration of relics, etc., many errors, contrary to the rule of faith, crept into the teaching and practice of the Church, such as: (1) Asking others to pray out of lack of faith, as Pharaoh repeatedly asked Moses to pray for him; and as King Zedekiah asked in vain for the prophet Jeremiah to pray for him. (Jer. 37:3) (2) Attributing to saints the power or glory that is proper to God alone. "You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." (Ps. 4:8) (3) Considering prayers to saints to be meritorious works that earn the remission of sins. (4) The notion that the merits of saints can be transferred to another person's account. (5) Displacing Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim 2:5)

Main Components: (3) Scripture Readings and Sermon

Why do we have Scripture readings?

God has revealed His Word and wants His people to hear His voice. This is how the Good Shepherd gathers His people (Jn. 10:3-5): “the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” In response, the people of God delight to hear His voice and follow Him. “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” (Ps. 119:97)

The Bible is a collection of the books that God inspired His prophets and apostles to write, through the Holy Spirit. As the books of Scripture were read during the Sabbath Day worship services of the synagogues in Jesus’ day and at the Temple, so we continue to read them today.

Why do we read from both the Old Testament and the New Testament?

The Old Testament is also read in churches, because it is also about Jesus, who said to his disciples after His resurrection: “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Lk. 24:44; see also Jn. 5:46) For this reason the New Testament preachers, as recorded in the book of Acts and in the Epistles, are full of quotations from the Old Testament, and explanations of how they are fulfilled in Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”.

Why do we have a Sermon?

The sermon is used to explain the Scriptures, and to apply them to the people. Jesus and His disciples preached continually, as part of their regular worship, whenever they visited synagogues and in the Temple, and at other times, as they had opportunity to teach. For this reason the sermon has also been a main component of the Divine Service from the very beginning.

Preachers must be very careful, however, to explain and apply the Word of God accurately, because God himself will hold them accountable for saying anything they should not, or for failing to say what they should.

Main Components: (4) The Lord's Supper

Since the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night when He was betrayed, Christians have included it, according to His command, "This do in remembrance of me", as often as they have gathered to worship. Indeed, the Lord's Supper has never been absent from the regular worship practice of the Church. Thus it maintains the place of greatest honour among us, as the feast of the victory of God over sin, death, the devil and the world.

The Divine Service: Before the Service

How should I enter the church?

Try to arrive a little early, to prepare yourself for the service that is about to take place. It is fitting to enter the church in silence, and say a short prayer, like this:

Almighty, ever-living God, grant that I may gladly hear your Word and that all my worship may be acceptable in your sight; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Or, to give another example:

O God, send your Holy Spirit into my heart, that He may enable me to receive the gift of grace which you have prepared for me this day, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

In addition, you can read the Scripture readings for the day.

If you are planning to commune in the Lord's Supper, it is especially fitting to prepare for Confession by examining yourself in light of the Ten Commandments and the Creed, to repent of all sinful thoughts, words and deeds that you can recall from the past week. Thus Christians ought to be in the regular habit of examining and judging themselves. (1 Cor. 11:27-32)

Can I talk and chat with other people before the service?

It is certainly appropriate to greet fellow brothers and sisters in Christ before you enter the sanctuary of the church.

Most importantly: if you have any ongoing enmity with another Christian, you should resolve your disagreement with him before the Divine Service begins, so that you can be at peace before you come before the altar. Thus Jesus says in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has

something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Once you enter the sanctuary, you are in God’s holy Temple—a house of prayer for all nations, and not a place for idle talk, or secular business. (Isaiah 56:7; Mt. 21:13; Mk. 11:17; Lk. 19:46) Both for your own sake, therefore, and for the sake of your neighbor who should also prepare himself for the service as described above, everyone ought to enter the space of the sanctuary in reverent silence.

Before the service, musicians may play fitting, reverent music that will not disturb the devotional efforts of those who are praying or preparing themselves for the service.

The Divine Service in Detail

Here is some of the history and biblical foundation of the Divine Service. The text of the service is given on the left column, with notes on the right and underneath. The red words ('rubrics') in the service are not spoken but give directions. In the rubrics, the word 'may' indicates an option, and 'shall' indicates a necessary direction.

THE DIVINE SERVICE

A hymn of invocation of the Holy Spirit or other hymn(s) may be sung.

THE INVOCATION

The Congregation shall rise, and all shall make the sign of the cross, and the Pastor shall say or chant:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Congregation shall say or chant:

Amen.

Headings in SMALL CAPS are not spoken.

The service may begin with a hymn calling upon (invoking) the Holy Spirit to bless the service, or other appropriate hymn(s) of praise and worship as needed or desired. The congregation may sit or stand to sing.

For the INVOCATION, the pastor and congregation face the altar, and trace upon themselves the sign of the cross, which was made on them when they were baptized.

The congregation says 'Amen', meaning 'may it be so', to join their agreement.

The first words of the Pastor are called the INVOCATION, which means 'Calling upon', since he is calling upon the name of God. The INVOCATION has several functions.

- It makes use of the name God has given to men, that we may call upon Him for our salvation. "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved." (Acts 2:21; see also Rom. 10:13)
- It reminds the congregation of holy baptism, by which they were made children of God. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, *Abba, Father!*" (Gal. 4:6; see also Rom. 8:15)
- It distinguishes Christian worship from the worship of other gods and religions, such as Judaism, Islam, etc. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." (Jn. 5:23)

Making the sign of the cross is an ancient practice, by which believers remind themselves of the saving passion and death of Christ. Christians are not ashamed of this sign. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18)

THE CONFESSION OF SINS

Facing the congregation, the pastor says:

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

All may kneel. Then shall be said or chanted:

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response: Who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.

Response: And you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS was previously known as THE CONFITEOR (Latin for 'I confess')

By this brief exhortation the pastor instructs the congregation to confess their sins sincerely, with genuine repentance in their heart.

Kneeling is an appropriate outward gesture to reflect inner contrition and repentance, and seeking something from the Lord in humility. Otherwise the congregation may remain standing.

The pastor faces the altar for the versicles, which come directly from Psalm 124:8 and Psalm 32:5.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS, which includes the ABSOLUTION, is part of the preparation. The liturgy of the Lord's Supper itself properly begins with THE INTROIT. It is fitting to require all believers to humble themselves in the presence of God, in keeping with Jesus' words, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Mt. 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14)

Scripture shows us through examples that the gesture of kneeling is fitting when praying to God to hear our petitions. (See 1 Kings 8:54; Mark 1:40) This gesture encourages everyone in the congregation to humble themselves, if they have not already done so.

Note: THE CONFESSION OF SINS has not always been part of the Divine Service (or the preparatory rite). Since ancient times, however, Confession was carried out before the Lord's Supper, to ensure that all who communed in the Lord's body and blood were pure in heart.³ Confession was carried out in private with the pastor, or there was a separate rite of Confession. The most difficult problem is to teach clearly that the Absolution from the pastor is received only by those who: (1) sincerely repent and believe; and (2) are baptized. Non-Christians, unbaptized catechumens, and hypocrites, whose hearts remain far from God, should not apply to themselves the words of THE ABSOLUTION. For these reasons THE CONFESSION OF SINS does not need to be a part of the Service, if Confession and Absolution is done in a different way. Moreover, private Confession ought to be maintained, even where this preparatory rite is joined to the Divine Service.

³ See *Didache* (chapter 14), a first century document.

Then the Pastor and congregation together shall say:

All: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I beg You, out of your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ; be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful creature.

Then the Pastor shall turn to the congregation to pronounce the Absolution:

Pastor: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The Pastor leads the congregation. He kneels and confesses his own sins, that all may imitate him. "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil. 4:9)

Every believer must confess. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:8-9) Any thought, word, deed, or hidden desire that is against God's will is sinful, whether we know it or not. (Ps. 90:8)

Confession cannot be done merely with the lips, which would be hypocritical, but must be from the heart, spoken "in spirit and in truth". (Mt. 15:8; Mk. 7:6; Jn. 4:23) It is a sacrifice of the heart. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, You will not despise." (Ps. 51:17)

The Absolution is entirely a gift of God's grace, not merited by works.

In pronouncing the Absolution, the Pastor is exercising what we call 'The Office of the Keys', based on Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

This is explained in the fifth part of Luther's *Small Catechism*. The Pastor receives the authority from Christ and the responsibility to declare the forgiveness of sins to all who repent and believe. (See also Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:23)

The name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is used, which is the name God has given to us, that we may call upon Him for the forgiveness of all our sins. Those who sincerely repent and believe should not doubt that they receive God's forgiveness. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. 33:11)

*All may stand to the close of THE COLLECT.
Then the Pastor or choir shall say or chant:*

THE INTROIT

*THE INTROIT and GLORIA PATRI may be
chanted by a choir or a singer.*

*If the Pastor speaks or chants THE INTROIT,
the congregation concludes by saying or
chanting:*

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and
to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the
beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Then all shall say or chant:

THE KYRIE

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

After the preparatory rite of Confession, THE DIVINE SERVICE itself begins with THE INTROIT. *Introitus* (Latin) means 'entrance'. Historically the Pastor and congregation entered the church while singing a Psalm—a tradition that goes back to apostolic times and before (see Ps. 100). Today the Pastor approaches the altar when THE INTROIT is said or chanted.

Chanting is preferred here, even if the opening versicles of Confession are spoken, which will help to distinguish this the beginning of the Divine Service from the preparatory rite of Confession.

THE INTROIT introduces the theme of the day. It is the first 'Proper', that is, a part of the Divine Service that is specific to the liturgical day and season. It guides the congregation to meditate on the teachings and lessons that will be presented more fully later in the service. There is a specific historical Introit for each Sunday of the church year.

THE INTROIT is such an ancient part of the liturgy, that most Lutherans prefer to use the Introits that have been used for more than a thousand years. Rarely has it ever been omitted entirely from the service, but it could be replaced with a Psalm.

There are three parts to THE INTROIT: (1) The antiphon. One or two verses, usually from a Psalm. If a choir sings THE INTROIT, the antiphon is repeated after the GLORIA PATRI. (2) The Psalm. Originally an entire Psalm, now only one or two verses from a Psalm (shortened in the 6th century). (3) The third part is the GLORIA PATRI, which turns any Psalm into a New Testament hymn. It is a doxology, which means 'giving glory' to God. The Trinitarian formula guards the Church against Arianism and any other false teaching that denies the full divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE KYRIE ('Lord' in Greek, short for *Kyrie eleison*, 'Lord, have mercy') has been a part of the liturgy from the very beginning. It is threefold, reflecting the three persons of the one true God. The congregation cries for mercy, like the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:22) or like the blind man (Lk. 18:39) in the Gospels. The implied full meaning is a humble plea for forgiveness, similar to the Hebrew word, 'Hosannah'.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty; O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father; You take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. You take away the sin of the world, receive our prayer. You sit at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For You only are holy; You only are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Then shall the Pastor say or chant:

THE SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Pastor: Let us pray.

Then the Pastor shall say or chant:

THE COLLECT FOR THE DAY

Response: Amen.

The GLORIA IN EXCELSIS is an ancient hymn, that guides people to join their worship with the company of heaven. The Latin title means ‘*Glory in the highest places*’, that is, in the heavens. The entire hymn echoes the worship of the holy angels, combining the words they sang at the Nativity of Christ (Lk. 2:14) with the image of their worship of the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:6-13; and Jn. 1:29).

Though joyful and confident in tone, the hymn still requires singers to be reverent and humble, by repeating the petitions ‘have mercy’ and ‘hear our prayer’. Like the angels who show continual humility before God (Is. 6:2; 1 Cor. 11:10), men must remain reverent and humble, even while boldly coming before His throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

Traditionally the GLORIA is always sung in the Divine Service, except during the more solemn seasons of Advent, Lent and Pre-Lent, when it is omitted or substituted with another canticle.

The Pastor faces the congregation for THE SALUTATION, which is a greeting and a blessing. (Judges 6:12) In return, the people bless the Pastor with the prayer, ‘And with thy spirit’, that the pastor may have God’s grace and protection as he carries out his duty. (2 Tim. 4:22)

The Pastor faces the altar for THE COLLECT FOR THE DAY, the second ‘Proper’ of the service. THE COLLECT usually consists of an address, a single petition and doxology. THE COLLECT is drawn from the readings that follow, to prepare the people to hear the Scriptures with devotion and attentiveness. The use of THE COLLECT is ancient; most of the collects we use today date back at least 1200 years, though some were written during the Reformation.

It is called THE COLLECT because it is the ‘collected’ prayer of entire congregation, led by the Pastor (while the congregation prays with him silently), and it gathers and focuses the congregation as a single united body with one united heart and voice.

The people may be seated for:

THE OLD TESTAMENT OR FIRST READING

The Pastor announces and reads the appointed passage, after which is said:

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God!

Then the Pastor shall say or chant, or a choir or singer shall chant:

THE GRADUAL

THE EPISTLE OR SECOND READING

The Pastor announces and reads the appointed passage, after which is said:

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God!

Then all shall rise to shout or sing, once or three times:

THE HALLELUJAH

The Scripture readings are a major and necessary sacramental portion of the service. Scripture is the “Sword of the Spirit” — a key component of the spiritual armour of every Christian, needed for overcoming the assaults of the Devil. (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12)

Jesus himself used Scripture to repel the temptations of the Devil, as an example for us to imitate. (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13)

The importance of the place of Scripture in the service reflects our confession that: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

The Pastor can read the lessons from the altar or from a lectern, facing the congregation.

It is fitting that readings are taken from Old and New Testaments, since both are revealed by one and the same God; and that there should always be an Epistle (‘Letter’) and Gospel lesson, which proclaim the saving work of Jesus Christ in greatest clarity.

Since the public reading of Scripture is part of the teaching office of the Pastor, it should not be performed by the laity in general, and certainly never by a woman: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” (1 Tim. 2:11-12) Historically an ordinand or a deacon has been permitted to assist in reading the Old Testament and Epistle, but a Pastor always reads the Gospel.

THE GRADUAL is a Psalm or part of a Psalm that originated as a response to the epistle, which was chanted by a deacon on the ‘step’ (Latin: *gradus*) below the altar; today it serves as a fitting response to the Old Testament reading.

THE HALLELUJAH (‘Praise the Lord’ in Hebrew) reminds us of the heavenly worship of God, as described in Revelation 19:1-6; the word also appears in Psalms 111:1, 117:1, 149:1. THE HALLELUJAH is fitting both as a response to THE EPISTLE and as a joyful anticipation of THE GOSPEL. THE HALLELUJAH is omitted during Passiontide (Pre-Lent to Good Friday).

The Pastor, or A Choir or Kantor may sing:

SENTENCES FOR THE SEASONS

Advent

Hallelujah! Remember, O Lord, your tender mercies: for they have been ever of old. Hallelujah!

Christmas

Hallelujah! Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the Lord: for He has made known His salvation. Hallelujah!

Epiphany

Hallelujah! Oh, praise the Lord, all you nations, and laud Him, all you people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Hallelujah!

Passiontide

Christ has humbled Himself and become obedient unto death: even the death of the cross.

Easter tide

Hallelujah! Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Hallelujah!

Whitsuntide

Hallelujah! You send forth your Spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth. Hallelujah!

Trinity

Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with your servant according unto your mercy and teach me your statutes. I am your servant, give me understanding: that I may know your testimonies. Hallelujah!

Or:

Hallelujah! Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers: praise Him and highly exalt Him forever. Hallelujah!

*If a seasonal sentence is used,
THE HALLELUJAH shall be repeated.*

The seasonal SENTENCES are an optional response, which can be added after the HALLELUJAH, which is repeated after the Sentence. Like the GRADUAL, each SENTENCE is drawn from a Scripture passage that fits the theme of the season.

The Sentence for Advent: from Psalm 25:6-7, recalls the expectation of the Church for the prophesied return of Christ.

The Sentence for Christmas: from Psalms 96:11 and 98:2, is full of celebration because the Lord is revealed to the world by His birth.

The Sentence for Epiphany: from Psalm 117:1-2, recalls the visit of the Magi and the manifestation of the divinity of Christ to the entire world.

The Sentence for Passiontide: from Philippians 2:8, emphasizes the humility of Jesus, and invites us to humble ourselves in repentance for our sins, which are the cause of our Saviour's suffering and death.

The Sentence for Eastertide, from 1 Corinthians 5:7, celebrates the death of Christ, which is joyful only because we know also of the truth of His resurrection from the dead.

The Sentence of Whitsuntide (Pentecost) is from Psalm 104:30, specifically to celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Sentence for the season of Trinity is from Psalm 119:124-125 (or from Daniel 3:52), which is general in nature, for the season in which the Church meditates on all of Christ's teachings: what we should believe (faith) and do (morals).

THE GOSPEL

The Pastor announces:

The Holy Gospel is written in the chapter of St., beginning at the verse.

Response: Glory be to You, O Lord!

The Pastor shall read the Gospel for the Day, after which he shall say:

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise be the You, O Christ!

Then all shall say together:

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Since the time the Gospels were written, they have always been read aloud as part of the Christian service. These writings were recognized from the beginning to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and infallible records of the life and teachings of Christ.

It is fitting that the Gospel reading is introduced with solemnity, since it is the way God speaks to us. The Pastor reads the Gospel, because it is his duty to proclaim it to all creation (Mk. 16:15)

When the reading of the Gospel is finished, the response marks the end of the reading, and an appropriate reaction to God's revelation, which is received with thanks.

After the Scripture readings, the congregation confesses the Creed, as a fitting response to God's Word. This order follows from Romans 10:14: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" For this reason the Creed may be placed after the sermon.

The Creed enables Christians to confess Christ publicly, about which Jesus says: "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 10:32; Lk. 12:8)

The entire content of THE APOSTLES' CREED is clearly set forth in Scripture.

THE APOSTLES' CREED is older than THE NICENE CREED, but both have their place in the Church. Customarily THE NICENE CREED is used on Sundays, feast days and ordinations, and THE APOSTLES' CREED is used for baptisms and rites for the confession of faith.

THE NICENE CREED was formulated as a result of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and the Council of Constantinople (AD 381), to affirm the full divinity of Christ, against Arianism: the false teaching of Arius and his followers, the Arians.

Or:

THE NICENE CREED

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, true God of true God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; through 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 at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the 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 through the prophets. And I believe 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.

THE NICENE CREED is included as a necessary part of the Divine Service, to protect and defend the Church against the false teaching of those who taught that Jesus was not fully God.

Today false teachers continue to threaten the fundamental truth of who Jesus is, and where He came from.

For example, David Jenkins, the Anglican bishop of Durham (1984-94), openly denied the Virgin Birth and the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus, and many in the Church of England continue to follow this trend of unbelief.

Creeds in the Lutheran Church are not merely historical words that describe what Christians used to believe. They are a literal description of the one true faith. Thus the Athanasian Creed states, "This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved." 'The Faith' here means the content of faith, or a description of what we believe. This is also called the 'rule of faith'.

Every part of the rule of faith is clearly taught in the literal meaning of Scripture, and no part of the faith depends on the interpretation or authority of the Church. Thus the Creed is solidly founded on the authority of *Scripture alone*.

During THE NICENE CREED, the Pastor by ancient custom genuflects to worship God during the words 'came down from heaven ... and was made man'.

THE CREED remains a symbol of the unity of the confession of the Church that worships and communes together. It is a summary or an epitome of Christian teaching, which must be accepted in whole; for to deny a part would be to deny the entirety of Scripture.

THE CHIEF HYMN

THE SERMON

*After the Pastor has finished the sermon,
the congregation shall rise to say or chant:*

THE OFFERTORY

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and
renew a right spirit within me. Cast me
not away from your presence, and take
not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore
unto me the joy of your salvation; and
uphold me with your free spirit. Amen.

*The offerings shall be gathered and brought
to the altar. Then shall follow:*

THE CHIEF HYMN, more than any other
hymn sung during the Divine Service,
focuses on the theme of the day, drawn
from the Scripture readings, and
anticipating the theme of THE SERMON.

THE SERMON takes prominent position in
Lutheran churches, which is often clear
from the raised platform of the pulpit,
where the Pastor stands like a watchman
in a tower.

The Pastor is required by God to preach
the fullness of the teachings of Jesus,
which includes everything that the
people ought to believe for their life and
salvation. (2 Tim. 4:1-4)

The content of any Sermon is closely tied to the Scripture readings, to ensure that the Pastor does not omit any teaching. He is also required by God, however, to preach against (to call the people to repent of) any specific sins or any false teachings that he perceives are a danger to the flock of Christ.

It is customary for the Pastor to open the sermon with the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", or with a blessing of grace, mercy and peace upon the congregation. (See 1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:3); and to close the sermon with a blessing of peace, or simply with the word 'Amen'.

The Pastor is not free to espouse his own opinions, theories or philosophies in THE SERMON, but must control his tongue, and humbly speak and apply the Word of God. At this time, he is, as it were, a divine oracle; for God Himself is speaking through Him. He is the voice of the Good Shepherd, who is feeding His sheep through His servant. (Jn. 10:16, 27; 21:15-17)

THE OFFERTORY here is taken from Psalm 51:10-12. Another suitable text could be chosen, pertaining to thanksgiving or the management of God's gifts, such as Hebrews 13:16 or Psalm 116:12-15, 17-19. Afterwards the gifts of the congregation are gathered or the people themselves bring them forward. The Pastor receives them and places them upon the altar, or on a separate table. They are a sacrifice to God, not to merit God's favour, but as a token of thanksgiving, and as a means of supporting the ministry of the Word and the merciful work of the Church. Thus we should listen to the Apostle: "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work." (2 Cor. 9:7-8)

THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Pastor: Let us pray for the people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

The Pastor announces any requested petitions, intercessions or thanksgivings; and any birth, engagement, death, etc. of members of the congregation; then the following or similar petitions may be used:

Almighty and most merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we give You thanks for all your goodness and tender mercies, especially for the gift of your dear Son and for the revelation of your will and grace; and we beseech You so to implant your Word in us that in good and honest hearts we may keep it and bring forth fruit by patient continuance in well-doing.

Most heartily we beseech You so to rule and govern your Church throughout the world, with all its pastors and people, that we may be preserved in the pure doctrine of your saving Word, whereby faith towards You may be strengthened, charity increased in us toward all mankind, and your kingdom extended. Send forth laborers into your harvest, and sustain those whom You have sent, that the Word of reconciliation may be proclaimed to all people and the Gospel preached in all the world.

Grant health and prosperity to all whom You have placed in authority, especially to and endue them with grace to rule after Your good pleasure, to the maintenance of righteousness and to the hindrance and punishment of wickedness, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

Turn the hearts of our enemies, that they may cease their enmity and walk with us in meekness and in peace.

THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL is a general prayer that gathers the petitions of the congregation, in preparation for the Lord's Supper. It includes all the prayers that a congregation should regularly pray. This prepared form may be used or adapted. Using a pre-written form, as opposed to extemporaneous or *ex corde* prayers, guides the Church to pray as Scripture teaches, and prevents us from leaving out prayers that we should include, and helps the Pastor to express the prayers with accuracy of doctrine, without introducing error.

It is fitting to pray for all people. (1 Tim. 2:1) First we pray for the Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught us: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Mt. 6:33) This we should do continually: "without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." (Rom. 1:8) We pray for the entire Church: pastors and people, especially for those who are persecuted for the Gospel. This is an apostolic command: "Pray for us!" (1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1. On prayers for the Church, see Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11; 9:14; 13:9; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:4, 19; Col. 1:3, 9; 4:3, 12; 2 Thess. 1:11)

Second we must pray for our rulers. "I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

Third we must pray for our enemies, as Jesus said: "bless those who curse you ... and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Mt. 5:44)

Comfort, O God, all who are in trouble, want, sickness, anguish of labor, peril of death, or any other adversity, especially those who suffer for the sake of your name and truth; that they may receive and acknowledge their afflictions as the manifestation of your fatherly will.

Although we deserve your righteous anger and punishments, yet we ask You, most merciful Father, not to remember our sins and transgressions, but out of your unspeakable goodness, grace, and mercy, defend us from all harm and danger of body and soul. Preserve us from false doctrine, from war and bloodshed, from plague and disease, from all disaster by fire and water, from hail and tempest, from failure of harvest and famine, from anguish of heart and despair of your mercy, and from an evil death. In every time of trouble show yourself a very present help, our refuge and our strength.

Cause the fruits of the earth to prosper, that we may enjoy them in due season. Give success to the Christian training of the young, to all lawful occupations, to all noble arts and useful industries, and crown them with your blessing.

Receive, O God, our bodies and souls and all that we have, together with the offerings we bring before You; for You have purchased us to be by your own, that we may live for You.

Here additional prayers may be added.

These and whatever else You would have us ask from You, O God, we pray that You would grant for the sake of the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Jesus taught us to ask God for our daily bread, and His instruction is repeated as a sacred admonition from the Apostle Paul: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7)

That our Lord wants us to pray for what we need is seen in his command, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Mt. 7:7; Lk. 11:9-13)

Jesus teaches often that God does not want us to worry about what we need for this body and life, which our Father in heaven provides for us. (Mt. 6:25-34) He still wants us to pray for what we need, confessing that: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17); and thanking Him for everything.

Finally we make the humble plea that God our Father should hear our prayer, not for the sake of our good works, but for the sake of Jesus Christ, through whom God reconciled the world to Himself and has enabled us to call upon Him, by giving us access to Him in the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 5:18)

In the conclusion, we ask God to give us whatever else we should have asked for but did not know to ask it. (Rom. 8:26) He nevertheless knows our needs before we ask. (Mt. 6:8, 32; Lk. 12:30)

Note: THE LORD'S PRAYER can be used to conclude; but the congregation will pray this later during the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, from which it should never be omitted.

The Pastor shall turn to face the people, and they shall say or chant:

THE PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

Response: We offer them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Response: It is meet and right so to do.

Then turning to face the altar, the Pastor shall say or chant:

PROPER PREFACES

Pastor: It is truly meet, right, just and salutary that we should always and everywhere give thanks to You, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God,

The Proper Preface continues according to the season:

Advent: Through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the Messiah, the very Lamb of God, and calling sinners to repentance, that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore ...

Christmas: For through the mystery of the Word made flesh the new light of Your glory has shone upon the eyes of our hearts, that we, as we acknowledge God visibly in the person of your Son, may be enthralled by the love of things invisible. Therefore ...

In preparation for the consecration of the Sacrament of the Altar—the summit which the entire Service is leading up to—the Pastor and people repeat that exchange of blessing, which they spoke before THE COLLECT OF THE DAY.

After the salutation, the Pastor continues with *Sursum Corda* (Lift up your hearts), exhorting the people to approach in humility, and offer up their hearts as a sacrifice that is pleasing to God. The words remind us of Psalm 51:17: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” And Lamentations 3:40-41: “Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord; Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven.”

The Proper Preface is always addressed to God the Father, and is the main prayer of thanksgiving (a Eucharistic prayer) before the Lord’s Supper. We thank God as Jesus himself gave thanks. The Reformers purified the Preface from the many prayers to saints and prayers for the dead, which had crept in over the years.

Advent: Prior to the Reformation there was no Proper Preface for Advent. Nonetheless, the prayer is fitting for the season, emphasizing the preaching of John the Baptist, as the Church again contemplates the Advent of Christ. The words derive from well known passages: Mt. 3:7; 25:31; Jn. 1:29, 36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5.

Christmas: This connects John 14:9, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” with the prayer of Saint Paul (Eph. 1:17-18): “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened”.

Epiphany: And now we praise You, that your only-begotten Son appeared in the substance of our mortality and that He has restored us by the new light of His own immortality. Therefore ...

Lent: Who on the tree of the cross did give salvation unto mankind, that, whence death arose, thence Life also might rise again; and that the ancient serpent, who by a tree once overcame, might likewise by a tree be overcome, through Jesus Christ our Lord; through whom with angels ...

Easter: But chiefly are we bound to praise You for the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; for He is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us and has taken away the sins of the world; who by His dying destroyed death and by His rising to life again restored to us everlasting life. Therefore ...

Ascension: Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who after his resurrection appeared openly to all His disciples and in their sight was taken up into heaven that He might make us partakers of His divine nature. Therefore ...

Pentecost: Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who ascended above the heavens and, sitting at your right hand, poured out on this day the Holy Spirit, whom He had promised, upon the sons of adoption; at which the whole earth rejoices with exceeding joy. Therefore ...

Epiphany: The manifestation of Jesus' divinity is thematically connected with the language of the Gospel of John: Christ is the light of the world.

Lent: With focus on Jesus' passion and death, two trees are contrasted, namely, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise, and the tree of the cross, on which our Lord was crucified. Moses prophesied concerning Christ: "he who is hanged [on a tree] is accursed of God." (Deut. 21:23; see also Isaiah 53:4) For He was cursed for us. (Gal. 3:13)

Easter: The Resurrection is celebrated in light of Jesus' sacrifice for us. John the Baptist's naming of Jesus as the Lamb of God is explained as a Paschal reference, as Paul also explains: "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." (1 Cor. 5:7) The destruction of death by the death of Christ is a recurring theme. (see Rom. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:55; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 2:13) Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel". (2 Tim. 1:10)

Ascension: This prayer connects the commemoration of Jesus' Ascension to sit at the right hand of the Father (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 22:69; Acts 2:33, etc.) to the promises of 2 Peter 1:3-4: "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ... that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature".

Pentecost: Commemorating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised He would send upon His disciples. "I will send you the Helper from the Father." (Jn. 15:26) On this basis we confess in THE NICENE CREED that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The prayer also derives from Galatians: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts". (Gal. 4:6)

Trinity: Who with your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, and are one Lord; not in the singleness of one person, but in the Trinity of one substance; for what we believe concerning your glory, according to your revelation, this we also believe concerning your Son and the Holy Spirit, without division or separation; so that in the confession of the one true eternal deity we adore your distinction in persons, your unity in essence, and your equality in majesty. Therefore ...

Days of the Apostles and Evangelists: Because You did mightily govern and protect Your Holy Church, which the blessed Apostles and Evangelists instructed in your divine and saving Truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore ...

General: Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who [this day] overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore ...

*Then shall follow the conclusion,
with mention of additional saints as the
occasion requires:*

Therefore [with Mary Magdalene, with Peter and James and John, with ...] with angels and archangels, with thrones and dominions, and with every soldier of the company of heaven, we sing a hymn to your glory, evermore praising You, saying:

Trinity: The language of the unity of substance (or essence) of the one God, and the equal glory and majesty of the distinct persons of the Trinity, derives from the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and subsequent confessions or ecumenical 'symbols' that were accepted as global standards of orthodoxy in the Church. The doctrine of the Trinity is unknown to man by nature, but revealed in Scripture, especially at the baptism of Christ (Mt. 3) and the sending of the apostles (Mt. 28). The distinction of the Father is that He begets the Son; of the Son, that He is begotten of the Father; and of the Spirit, that He proceeds from the Father and Son, and is sent into our hearts to sanctify and vivify us with true faith.

Days of the Apostles and Evangelists: Such days would include the Feast of Stephen, John, etc.

General: This form is used during the long season of Trinity, when many different themes surface concerning the teachings of Jesus and the life of the Church; therefore, a commemoration of Jesus' death and resurrection is fitting, which anchors the thanksgiving in the central article of faith, concerning our salvation.

Every Proper Preface concludes with a corporate emphasis, that our worship is joined with the prayer and praises of the angelic hosts and the entire company of heaven. The glory and majesty of God are remembered by the might and number of the angelic hosts who worship Him without ceasing. The names of specific saints may be added to the conclusion, as is fitting according to the specific season. At Easter, for example, the Pastor may add "with Mary Magdalene, Peter and James and John, and with all the witnesses of the resurrection", or on a saint's day that saint may be mentioned.

The conclusion of THE PROPER PREFACE also introduces the entire congregation's singing of THE SANCTUS.

Then shall be said or chanted:

THE SANCTUS

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the
highest. Blessed is He who comes in the
name of the Lord. Hosanna, Hosanna,
Hosanna in the highest.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

In THE SANCTUS (Latin: 'holy', also known by the Greek title: *Trisagion* or in Latin: *Ter Sanctus*, 'thrice holy') 'Holy' is said three times, for the three persons of the Trinity. The Hebrew 'Sabaoth' means 'armies', referring to the angels; 'Hosanna' means 'Save, I pray.'

THE SANCTUS is from Isaiah 6:3 and Matthew 21:9. The song of heaven is joined to the song from Jesus' triumphal entry. It is a fitting compilation, as Christ approaches during the Divine Service, to be present in the Sacrament of the Altar.

THE SANCTUS, like THE GLORIA, is another heavenly song. The angelic song of Isaiah 6 is taken up by the four living creatures of Revelation 4, which the elders join in, by offering their worship to God. Thus the congregation does not *cause* the saints in heaven to worship God, but we *join in with* their worship, which they are *always* praising God in heaven.

THE LORD'S PRAYER may never be omitted from this part of the service; praying as the Lord Jesus taught us (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4) prepares us to receive the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. THE LORD'S PRAYER may be spoken or chanted by the pastor, but it is better for everyone to pray together, every heart must receive the Lord's body and blood in faith. The congregation may kneel to pray, to express the sincerity of their petitions.

As Jesus teaches in Matthew 6, the second part of the fifth petition is especially important ("as we forgive" etc.), that we do not withhold forgiveness from others, but are reconciled and at peace with all in the household of faith.

Jesus' gift of this prayer to his disciples – and to us – makes us confident that the form of our prayer is pleasing to God our Father. With confidence in the perfection of the words themselves, we only need to ensure that our hearts match the words of our lips. If we ask God for forgiveness without believing that we have any sins, then: "we sin gravely, since we are telling a lie in the course of the holy mysteries themselves."⁴ Luther's *Small Catechism* likewise emphasizes the need for faith at the Lord's Supper.

⁴ Augustine, *Sermon* 351.6. PL 39, 1541-2.

*Then shall the Minister say or chant,
while still facing the altar:*

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night on 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. This do in remembrance of Me."

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

*Then the Pastor, elevating the elements
before the people, shall say or chant:*

PAX DOMINI

The peace of the Lord be with you always!

Response: Amen.

*Then all shall say or chant, while the Pastor
breaks the bread and communes himself:*

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION (Latin: *Verba institutionis*) are recorded in Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. Jesus' words themselves teach or remind us: (1) the Lord's command that we should do this ("Take, eat ... drink of it, all of you"), which shows the Lord's Supper is His institution, not an invention of men; (2) He gives us His own true body and blood in the Sacrament; and (3) He does this for a specific reason, namely, "for the remission of sins".

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION are usually understood to be the moment of the consecration, when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. To teach the people to discern this meal from all others, the pastor makes symbolic gestures: (1) He makes the sign of the cross over the bread while saying 'this is my body' and over the wine while saying, 'the New Testament in my blood'; (2) After saying, 'in remembrance of Me', he lifts up the bread (and wine respectively), then after placing it back on the altar, he kneels before Christ's presence.

In the ancient Church, these words were incorporated into longer prayers that followed the Preface.

After the words of institution, the Pastor takes the bread in his right hand, and cup in his left hand, and turning around, he holds them up before the people, for the PAX DOMINI (Latin: 'The peace of the Lord').

During the AGNUS DEI (Latin: 'Lamb of God'), the Pastor turns to the altar, breaks the bread, kneels and communes himself, at which time he says a fitting private prayer, such as: "Lord, I am not worthy for You to enter under my roof, but only say the word, and your servant shall be healed." (derived from the words of the centurion in Mt. 8:8)

AGNUS DEI

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace. Amen.

THE DISTRIBUTION

During the distribution, the congregation may sing one or more hymns, psalms or canticles.

The Pastor communes the congregation, saying, when he gives the bread:

The body of Christ. *Or:* Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, given into death for your sins and raised for your justification.

Then saying, when he gives the chalice:

The blood of Christ. *Or:* Take, drink; this is the blood of Christ, shed for you for the remission of all your sins.

At the end of THE DISTRIBUTION, or at the dismissal of each table, the Pastor shall pronounce a blessing:

May the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul unto life everlasting. Depart in Peace. Amen.

The AGNUS DEI is repeated, as a prayer of worthy approach, so that the people may judge themselves, that no one may eat and drink to his own judgment. (1 Cor. 11:27-31) Calling Jesus the Lamb of God reminds us that He shed his blood as the price of our redemption. (1 Peter 1:19; 1 Cor. 5:7) Jesus fulfils the prophetic type of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:21-23)

THE DISTRIBUTION is the highest point of the service, when the communicants eat and drink the Sacrament as soon as is given to them. Christ's commands "eat" and "drink" do not allow any other uses of the Sacrament, such as reserving the elements to be adored, parading the consecrated elements in a procession, keeping them at home, etc.

To encourage piety and humility during the distribution, the people should kneel to receive the Sacrament, in adoration of Christ, and in recognition of their unworthiness to receive the gift.

The Pastor can follow a short or longer sentence, to declare again, and encourage all hearts to believe that they are receiving Christ's true body and blood in the bread and wine, as Jesus said, and that this is for them, for the remission of their sins. The longer sentences are taken from Romans 4:25 and Matthew 26:28.

The Pastor's blessing encourages the people to believe in the saving power of Christ's body and blood, and its spiritually medicinal value of bringing eternal life and salvation to the entire person – body and soul – especially in view of the coming resurrection of the dead. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day ... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (Jn. 6:54-56)

All shall rise and say or chant:

NUNC DIMITTIS

Lord, now You let your servant depart in peace according to your word, For my eyes have seen your Salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of your people Israel.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Then shall be said or chanted:

THE THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good!

Response: And his mercy endures forever.

Or:

Pastor: As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,

Response: You do show the Lord's death until He comes.

Pastor: We give thanks to You, Almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift; and we beseech You that of your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Or:

The NUNC DIMITTIS (Latin: 'Now you let depart') is a canticle, a short biblical song that was added to the Divine Service by Martin Luther, as a fitting response from those who received the Lord's Supper. The words come from the prophecy of Simeon, after he saw the infant Jesus in the Temple. (Lk. 2:29-32) For similarly in the Lord's Supper, the faithful have seen the body and blood with their own eyes (and indeed also touched and tasted). Our response is similarly one of faith, that the Lord has been faithful to His promise of granting His Salvation in the Sacrament.

THE THANKSGIVING after the Lord's Supper is especially fitting, just as we ought to give thanks after every meal. The Pastor introduces the prayer with a sentence, which comes from 1 Chronicles 16:34 (or Psalm 106:1), expressing thanks for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Or the Pastor may use the sentence from 1 Corinthians 11:26, which Paul gives after his discussion on the Lord's Supper; which reminds the congregation that this Sacrament was instituted by Christ to be used repeatedly until He comes again.

Then follows the prayer of thanksgiving itself, for which again we are provided with two options.

Each prayer, apart from giving thanks for the blessing just received, focuses on the petition to God to strengthen and preserve in faith those who have communed but must shortly depart from the Lord's house. It is a prayer for divine assistance until such time as the faithful can return, to be nourished again in a similar manner.

Pastor: O God the Father, Fount and Source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament; and we beseech You not to forsake your children, but evermore to rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Then shall be said or chanted:

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with thy spirit.

BENEDICAMUS

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God.

Then shall the Pastor say or chant:

THE BENEDICTION

Pastor: 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.

Response: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Silent prayer.

The singing of an additional hymn is optional after THE THANKSGIVING.

The conclusion is now imminent, with the approach of the final blessing, which the people prepare to receive with the SALUTATION and BENEDICAMUS.

THE BENEDICTION, known as the 'Aaronic Blessing' comes from Numbers 6:24-26, which the Lord gave to Moses as the blessing for Aaron to use, to bless the people of Israel. This blessing is fittingly continued as a divine gift, since the Pastor is still today the conduit of the blessing of Almighty God to the people of the spiritual Jerusalem. The image of God's face, the light of which shines in blessing on all who place their trust in Him, is found frequently elsewhere in Scripture. "Do not hide your face from me." (Ps. 27:9) "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us." (Ps. 67:1) "Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved." (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19)

"For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

The triple cadence of the blessing elicits a triple 'Amen' from the congregation, after which they may stay seated to pray silently before they depart in peace.

Having received the final blessing, the congregation are encouraged to believe that they return to their homes like the publican of Luke 18:14, "justified before God", that is, declared righteous in His sight, not because of their works, but for the sake of the meritorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on them the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through his Word and Sacrament, which they have received in faith, trusting in His promises.