

Worship

Explanation of our Liturgy

For Lutherans, worship begins with God, not with us and what we have to offer to God. It is like a conversation, one that God starts as He speaks words of life to lost and dying people. In this conversation, God's people respond to Him after He has first spoken. This is consistent with our most basic beliefs which states that we are saved by God's grace through the faith He gives us and not by any work on our part. We do respond to Him with good works that are a proof of the faith within us. The chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ, and the liturgy serves as a visual aid.

There is a strong sense of mission in the liturgy: to proclaim the Gospel by sharing the gifts they received from God.

+ The Order of Divine Service I +

THE PRE-SERVICE MUSIC—PRELUDE

Before the service actually begins, the organist plays the prelude. The word "prelude" comes from two Latin words meaning "to play before" something. The music sets the mood of the service. When you hear lively music on the radio or TV, you want to move, tap your fingers, or dance. When you hear quiet music, you want to settle down and be quiet too. The prelude prepares you for what is to come.

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

This is the call to God's people "to enter the Lord's gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise." (Psalm 100:4)

THE OPENING HYMN

We are a singing church, so we begin with a hymn. It is an opening hymn which sets the mood for worship and often relates to the theme of the day. This hymn may be a...

- Hymn of Praise for his wonderful blessings,
- Prayer to the Holy Spirit, or
- Hymn reflecting the season of the church year.

THE INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

The word "invocation" comes from a Latin word which means "calling on." In the invocation, we "call on" God, asking Him to bless our worship.

The words remind us of our heavenly connection even here on earth. These words were said over us when we were baptized. It was then that we were brought into his heavenly family. Many baptismal fonts are eight-sided. The number eight signaled "eternity" in biblical times. In baptism, God clothed us with a robe of righteousness that is our ticket to heaven. When we remember our baptism, we are reminded that we are on our way to heaven.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord, Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, imploring Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

People: **Who made heaven and earth.**

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

People: **And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Pastor: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against you by thought, word, and deed; therefore we flee for refuge to your boundless mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People: **O most merciful God, since You have given Your only begotten Son to die for us, have mercy on us and for His sake grant us forgiveness of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

Pastor: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us and has given His only son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised then His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Grant this, Lord, to us all.

People: **Amen.**

The purpose of a public confession of sins at the beginning of the service is that we might be prepared to receive the grace of God during our worship. We begin humbly, admitting that we bring nothing worthy of the goodness that we are about to receive.

In the absolution, the pastor announces God's grace to us and in Jesus' name forgives all our sins. Once again we know that our prayers for forgiveness are

answered. God has already forgiven us, and He forgives us every single day. The entire mood of the liturgy changes. We realize again that we are children of God. Once more we know we are in His very presence. What a glorious feeling! Our souls seem to go up to Him who loves us so.

THE INTROIT: Psalm

“Introit” comes from Latin and means “a going in” or “entrance.” Acknowledging God’s presence and having been made clean by forgiveness we now enter into the worship service itself. It is the first element in the Service of the Word. It provides a meditative step between confession and receiving the blessings of God’s Word.

THE KYRIE

People: Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

In the Kyrie we greet God as the people of old greeted their king when he came to them. The people welcomed him and cried to him for help. Likewise, the Kyrie is the unceasing cry for mercy on a world suffering from the curse of sin. It embraces not only our won but without exception all the misery, suffering, and affliction of humanity.

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Pastor: Glory be to God on high:

People: and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give You thanks for Your great glory. O Lord God, heav’nly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy; who takes away the sin of the world, receive our prayer; who sits at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy. For you only are holy; you only are the Lord; you only, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are the most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

God’s answer to the Kyrie is the redemptive work of Christ. We had been enclosed in a dark world of sin, and now the bright light of heaven breaks down upon us. For this we adore and praise Him in a hymn of praise.

THE COLLECT

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

It is simply a greeting. “The Lord be with you” – “And also with you.” It is as if the pastor is saying to us, “God bless you,” and we reply “God bless you too.” This sums up the relationship in Christ Jesus that the pastor and people have.

Pastor: Let us pray to the Lord.
People: Amen

Just before we hear our Savior's Word, we have a special petition to bring to him. The collect is a collection of the main thoughts of the day summarized in this short prayer and applies them to our theme.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.

The first reading from Scripture is usually from the Old Testament. This part of the Bible contains the story of the Israelites, whom God chose for His own people and from whom He raised up a Savior. The exception to this is the Easter season when this reading is from the Book of Acts.

THE GRADUAL

The Gradual is a portion of Scripture, fitting to the day or season, chosen to respond to what has been read. Most frequently it offers praise for some action of God. It is also a bridge to the second lesson.

THE EPISTLE

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.
People: Thanks be to God.

The Epistle is a letter to you from God. The New Testament contains 21 such letters. They speak of topics that young churches and believers face by instructing the readers in correct doctrine and Christian living.

THE ALLELUIA VERSE

The Verse is another break between Scripture readings. However, unlike the Gradual which responds to the previous reading, the Old Testament lesson, the Verse propels us toward the words of Christ, the Gospel.

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the ninth chapter.
People: Glory to you, O Lord.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.
People: Praise to You, O Christ.

The Gospel tells something from the life of Jesus and very often quotes His words. It draws us to Jesus, our Redeemer, our friend, our brother, the one who has

tenderly brought us to the Father. That's why, before we hear the Gospel reading, we offer a word of praise.

THE NICENE CREED

People: 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 the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And he will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Together we respond to the Word read and preached when we say the Creed. The word "creed" comes from "credo," Latin for "I believe." There are three universal creeds from the early Christian church that we use: The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

THE SERMON HYMN

The Sermon Hymn or Hymn of the Day follows the theme of the readings and sets the stage for the sermon. Because of its special place near the high point of the Word of God, the Hymn of the Day is selected to assist the Gospel reading. It retells part of the Gospel or continues thoughts like those in the Gospel. It may apply the teachings in the Gospel to our lives.

THE SERMON

The sermon, like the other parts of the service, is an act of worship. In it, God speaks to us through the pastor. He is a living witness of the Gospel, applying the Word of God to our own times and conditions.

The sermon is one way that the Holy Spirit confronts and warns us (Law), and offers us salvation and delivers eternal life (Gospel).

THE GATHERING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

The gifts of God's people are a response to God's blessings "as God has prospered them" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Our offerings are for the support of the church. They enable the church to provide the written and spoken Word of God, Christian education, and pastoral care (food, clothing, shelter, and a helping hand) to those in need.

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS—THE OFFERTORY

The Offertory, usually sung, is part of the offering. It focuses on what God has done and is still doing in our lives. The worshipers sing the offertory to express gratitude for all of God's blessings, dedicate themselves to God, and request his continued blessings.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

In these prayers, God's redeemed people pray first for spiritual concerns, that God's Spirit work among them and everywhere Christians gather. Next, because they know Christ, Christians pray for the world. Then follows the "special concerns" section. In this part we pray for those who are ill or hospitalized or in life-threatening situations. Prayers are offered for families that are suffering the loss of loved ones.

+ The Service Of Holy Communion +

THE PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

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

People: It is good and right so to do.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. Therefore with angles and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying:

Like small steps, this dialog moves us from that part of the service that centered on the Word of God toward the part of the service centered on the meal Christ instituted.

THE SANCTUS

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of Sabaoth. Heav'n and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

The Sanctus means "holy." When we join in singing this heavenly song, we remember how different God is from us. In God's presence we sense our unworthiness. We are overwhelmed by God. Therefore, we shift our thoughts from ourselves to Him alone and what He has done.

THE PRAYER OF THANKS

Pastor: Lord of heaven and earth, we praise and thank You for having had mercy on those whom You created, sending Your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. With repentant joy we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and His blood on the cross. Gathered in the name and the remembrance of Jesus, we beg You, O Lord, to forgive, renew, and strengthen us with Your Word and Spirit. Grant us faithfully to eat His body and drink His blood as He bids us do in His own testament. Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us.

Our thanksgiving, which has already begun in the Preface continues in this before-meal prayer. We thank God, who rules the whole universe, for sending his Son to save us, because we know that all who believe in Jesus are saved. Along with our thanks, we also ask God to make our faith strong and alive, so that we will receive the sacrament with genuine joy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Here in this perfect prayer, Jesus shows us how to pray. His words become our words. His thoughts guide our thoughts. We pray to God as our Father, using this prayer of the family of God because the Lord's Supper is our family meal. This is our table prayer

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me. In the same way also, He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: And also with you.

When Jesus instituted Holy Communion on the day before He died, He knew what was about to happen so He gave his “last will and testament.” A will not only distributes a person’s possessions, it also says something about how the person wants to be remembered.

THE AGNUS DEI

People: O Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us your peace. Amen.

As Christ comes to us in the Holy Supper, we recognize him as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us to free us from the bondage of sin and death.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Each communicant receives both the bread and the wine, but the method of distribution may vary. Always, thought, the method shows reverence.

THE DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

It is a good practice to offer silent prayer of thanks when we return to our pews. While the meal is being distributed, the congregation and/or the choir sing one or more hymns.

THE POST COMMUNION CANTICLE

People: Lord, now 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 will be forever. Amen.

Once again we express our appreciation to our gracious God for giving us this Holy Meal through Jesus Christ.

THE POST COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

People: And His mercy endures forever.

Pastor: Let us pray to the Lord.

Pastor: We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore 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, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

Pastor: Bless we the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Once more we express our appreciation to our gracious God for giving us this Holy Meal through Jesus Christ.

THE BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

People: **Amen. Amen. Amen.**

The word “benediction” comes from two Latin words “bene” which means “good,” and “dictus” which means “to speak.” The pastor literally speaks “good” upon the people, in other words blesses them.

The Benediction is spoken with uplifted hands, in the same way that Christ raised His hands to bless His disciples before His ascension. As the pastor says the words of blessing, the sign of the cross is made. The cross is the symbol of the Lord’s victory over sin and the basis of our peace with God.