



GRACE **LUTHERAN** CHURCH
LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD

Liturgical Notes:

Explanations of the Elements of Liturgy



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Greeting

The Greeting comes from the appointed Psalm in the Lectionary, a series of Scripture readings which follow the Church Year. These readings follow the themes of the life of Christ and the life of the Church (along with the feasts and festivals observed along the way). The primary reading is always the Holy Gospel. The selected Psalm, the Old Testament reading, and the Epistle support the theme set forth by the Holy Gospel.

Confession and Absolution

We confess our sins so that we may approach God with a clean slate preparing us for worship, especially for hearing the Word and receiving the Lord's Supper. God responds with the absolution which sets us free from the burden of sin. The pastor speaks in Christ's office, so it is Christ who forgives us. The pastor is His mouthpiece. (1st John 1:8-9 and Luke 10:16)

Service of the Word

Entrance Hymn

Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn: The word "Introit" is Latin for "Enter." Who is entering into what? The people of God enter into the presence of God to praise Him. We are able because Jesus has entered our lives through His Word and Sacraments. This is why we continue with the Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn: that we may continually come into His presence through Christ's Word which here also highlights the theme of the day.

Kyrie

The title *Kyrie* is short for *kyrie eleison*, Greek for "Lord, have mercy." Our cry for mercy echoes the petitions of afflicted souls in the Gospels: "Have mercy on me!" Because this follows the absolution/having received God's forgiveness in Christ, we pray with *boldness* and *confidence* that the LORD have mercy upon us for all of our other needs of body and soul.

Gloria in Excelsis/This is the Feast

The Gloria in Excelsis ("glory [to God] in the highest") or Hymn of Praise. Having just asked the LORD in the Kyrie for blessings as God's forgiven children, we now praise the LORD as the One who can and who does deliver these uncountable blessings in Christ. In the Gloria, we continue the celebration of Christmas for Immanuel/God with us/Christ and in This Is the Feast we worship with the heavenly host the Lamb of God/Jesus who takes away the sin of the world.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

The Salutation casts God's peace upon God's people through the office of the Holy Ministry. It is not a wish, but a bestowal. God's people acknowledge their reception of God's peace in Christ and affirm their pastor's call to serve in Christ's office. The Collect of the Day is a short prayer on the theme of the Gospel of the Day. We join in prayer with the whole body of believers, the communion of saints, and with generations to come. The "Amen" makes the Collect the congregation's own.

Old Testament Reading

The OT reading reminds us of how God worked in the OT. We remember that the OT focuses on Christ. It is about Him.

Gradual/Psalm

Gradual is from the Latin for *step*. It is a transition between the OT reading to the next reading. We recite a portion of a psalm or another short passage of Scripture which reinforces seasonal themes.

Epistle

The Epistle ("Letter") shows how God's Word accomplishes what it says: how it creates faith, bestows forgiveness, gives hope, and strengthens God's people in their battle against the sinful nature, the world, and Satan. It teaches how by God's grace we are enabled to walk with the Holy Spirit and experience Christ's life in and through us.

Alleluia

As we are about to hear the Gospel of Christ, we confess the LORD present with us that we might properly receive His Word into our hearts and minds. "Alleluia" means "Praise the LORD." Those who praise Christ for the salvation He brings for sinners are ready to receive Him.

Holy Gospel

The Holy Gospel, the third reading, comes from the life and teachings of Christ. It establishes the theme for the day. With the sermon, it represents the summit or high point of the first half of the service, the Service of the Word.

Creed (Note: The creed is sometimes spoken after the sermon)

Having received the Word of the LORD, we now confess the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. These Creeds ("I believe" statements of faith) express our unity in faith, the same faith the Church has confessed for over 2000 years.

Hymn of the Day

The Hymn of the Day is the principal hymn of the Divine Service and relates to the theme of the day from the Gospel. God's Word is sung by His people, the Holy Church.

Sermon

In the Sermon, the pastor proclaims God's words of judgment and grace (Law and Gospel). As the prophets, apostles, and even Jesus Himself did, the pastor speaks on behalf of God, feeding God's people as a faithful undershepherd of Christ.

Prayer of the Church

Equipped through the Word of God and strengthened in faith, we come together in corporate and unified prayer for the world, the Church, the congregation, and local and special concerns. We should never underestimate how these united prayers bless and preserve the world.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface and Proper Preface

The Service of the Word complete, the Preface begins the second half of the Divine Service. Recognizing our fellowship in Christ, we lift up our hearts as one to the Savior who comes in the Sacrament of the Altar—also known as the Eucharist, which means "thanksgiving." In the Proper Preface we focus our thanksgiving on the theme of our festival or church season.

Sanctus

Sanctus means *holy*. It is the angelic hymn from Isaiah 6. Because we are about to receive the LORD's true presence with His true body and true blood in the Blessed Communion, we acknowledge His holy presence and proclaim His glory.

Lord's Prayer

This is the chief and most important Christian prayer that Jesus Himself taught His disciples to pray as recorded in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. It is especially appropriate to pray before receiving the Holy Sacrament.

The Words of Our Lord

Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 record the words of our Lord spoken at the last supper which established the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion/The Eucharist/The Sacrament of the Altar. These "words of institution" or "consecration" give us exactly what Christ said: His body (that was given to us on the cross of Calvary) and His blood (that was shed for us on the cross of Calvary that covers our sins). This is not an ongoing sacrifice, but rather a real reception of the one-time sacrifice for all time. Through these words of Christ, we receive His very real, true, actual body and blood in, with, and under the consecrated bread and consecrated wine so that we receive—as Christ said and says—for the forgiveness of sins.

Pax Domini

These words are the Latin for "the peace of the Lord." The risen Christ calmed the fears of His first disciples when He appeared and spoke peace upon them (John 20:19). Here, the pastor in Christ's office speaks peace to us on Christ's behalf. This peace flows from Christ Himself. In John 20 and in The Lord's Supper, it is the real presence of Jesus's very body that gives us God's peace that surpasses all understanding.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei means "Lamb of God," and reminds us that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Sung before the reception of Holy Communion signifies that we recognize Jesus who gave Himself for the life of the world. The Old Testament sacrifices with lambs foreshadowed the Lamb Jesus who "was pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). His blood makes atonement for our sins. That is, covers our sin so that we are now made one with God (at-one-ment). The Lamb of God washes us clean from sin. This is the One we receive in the Holy Sacrament.

Nunc Dimittis/Thank the Lord

Nunc Dimittis or other Post-Communion Canticle: When Simeon saw the baby Christ, he prophesied, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation..."! He was rejoicing for the fact that He saw God in the flesh and was now completely at peace, ready to depart this earth. He life was whole. He knew Jesus! We sing this song *Nunc Dimittis* which is Latin for "now let [your servant] depart." We have seen and received the Christ in, with, and under the bread and the wine in Holy Communion. Our lives are complete! We have God's peace through the forgiveness of sins we've received in Jesus through the Sacrament. On other occasions we sing "Thank the Lord" as we thank God for the reception of His divine promises to us received through Holy Communion.

Thanksgiving

Having received the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, we now ask the LORD to bless us going forward to live as His people, loving our neighbors, and extending Christ's light to the world. This "collect" (liturgical structured prayer) collects our thanks to God for His gifts just received.

Benediction

In Numbers chapter 6 (from the Latin for "[The LORD] bless [you]) the LORD gives a final blessing that puts God's Name upon us that we may be a blessing to the world as the people of God, the Church, the royal priesthood of the LORD Jesus Christ.