

### **The Confession and Absolution**

We gather as family, anxious to see each other and greet each other, and prepare to meet our God in awe and reverence.

- We come before a holy God who demands perfection, and we realize that we need to unload our sin, before we can dare to approach His throne. We do this in the Confession and Absolution.
- The Altar reminds us of God's presence in mercy, that is,  
We remember the Old Testament sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins.  
We see the symbolism of the coffin and empty tomb.  
We see the altar set as Table for the Lord's Supper.  
We remember the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, and the heavy veil torn in two, allowing us access into the holy place.

The direction the Pastor faces and his posture help us to know who's speaking in our dialogue with God. When he faces the altar, he is one of us, speaking for and with us to God. When he faces the congregation, he speaks God's words to us. Once we have confessed our sins and been assured of God's forgiveness the pastor moves inside the chancel as a symbol of our bold, confident access to God.

The Kyrie is the first prayer of the gathered, forgiven congregation. It is a cry for mercy, the same cry of the Canaanite woman, blind Bartimaeus and the ten lepers, as we ask the King to hear and help us.

The Hymn of Praise, traditionally the "Gloria in Excelsis" or "This is the Feast", is our great celebration, thanking God for who He is and what He has done.

The Collect is the short, concise prayer of God's collected people, asking for some huge gift. Collects follow the form of naming God, giving the reason we ask Him, asking Him, the result, and the Trinitarian closing. With our "Amen" we all agree together, Yes!

**The Service of the Word**, the middle portion of our worship service, starts from the presupposition that God is real and does exist, and that He has revealed Himself in His Holy Word. If that is true, it makes sense that hearing that Word would be a major part of each worship service. Our Lectionary, the series of readings for each Sunday, is the Lutheran version of the Revised Common Lectionary used by most liturgical churches. The idea of choosing readings, called *pericopes*, dates from the second century. The *Old Testament Lesson* is taken from one of the 39 Old Testament books except during the Easter season, when the First Lesson is taken from the book of Acts. The *Epistle Lesson* comes from a letter written to one of the early churches. These lessons are read by a lay person, a representative of the congregation, visually showing Luther's contribution of placing the Bible in the people's hands and language. Our response to "This is the Word of the Lord" gives praise and thanks to God for

preserving His Word through many centuries down to us in our time.

The *Gospel Lesson* comes from one of the four Gospels, and because it tells what Jesus Christ Himself said and did as He walked on our earth, it is set as a precious Jewel and major high point of our service, with either a Gospel procession, or special spoken or sung responses. We stand out of awe and respect, giving our full attention to this reading.

The *Apostles' Creed* is a very early short statement summarizing the Apostles' teaching, and was used at baptisms in the early church. The *Nicene Creed* dates from the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. and contains statements refuting the heresies that had crept into the Church at that time. Having again heard the Word of God in the lessons and/or the sermon, we speak the Creeds to God, to each other, and to the world, as statements of what we believe today.

The *Sermon* is the time for explanation, for words of God's Law applied to our lives today, and for the sweet comfort of His Gospel, His words of forgiveness. (See Nehemiah 8) Sermons should arouse emotions and responses from God's people, which we give voice to in the Offertory or Creed.

### **Service of the Sacrament**

Our celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, like the Gospel reading, is a precious jewel and so, in the final section of the liturgy, the Service of the Sacrament, we find a full setting rich in Biblical imagery and music. The Salutation, a greeting dating as far back as Ruth, accents the togetherness of Pastor and people, as we come closer and closer, approaching the throne of God and the table set by Him. We are reminded of both a sense of awe and joy as we reflect on this Gift. As Jesus gave thanks before His last meal with His disciples, so several times in the communion liturgy we give thanks to God.

The Proper Preface, like all the Propers of the service, changes with the seasons. (The Ordinaries are the elements in the service which remain the same week after week.) The Proper Preface ends with "Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven..." putting us on that threshold between earth and heaven, where we and all God's creatures, saints on earth and saints in heaven, kneel before the Lord, receiving a "fore-taste of the Feast to come."

Some of the vocabulary words in this section are:

Meet – fitting and proper

Salutary – health-giving

Laud – praise

Magnify - make big, lift high

Sabaoth (not Sabbath) - armies

The Sanctus is the six-winged seraphims' song from Isaiah 6. We are indeed on "holy ground" here! The middle of this song switches to the Palm Sunday story, and we see the connection between Yahweh, the mighty Lord high on His lofty throne in the temple filled with smoke, to Jesus, the Lord in flesh, humbly seated on a donkey, going to the altar of sacrifice.

We pray the Lord's Prayer as our before meal prayer, especially connecting "Give us this day our daily bread" with the meal about to happen. The Words of our Lord, the words of Institution, are taken from the Gospels and 1 Corinthians. They are not mechanical or magical words of incantation, but transport us to that upper

room, “on the night Jesus was betrayed”, to partake of the Last Supper with Jesus and His disciples, before his betrayal, denial, arrest and trials.

Once more we ask for peace in the Pax Domini and the Agnus Dei, the “Lamb of God”, taken from John the Baptist’s words in the Gospels.

We close communion with Simeon’s words, the same words he sang holding the infant Jesus at the temple, “mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” We, too, have seen and tasted the Lord Jesus. He is inside us! Other options here include the “Thank the Lord and sing His praise” which send us out to “tell everyone what He has done!”

The Benedicamus and Benediction are “good words”. When we bless the Lord, we give Him thanks and praise. When He blesses us, (we use the same words He gave to Moses’ brother, Aaron, 3500 years ago) He keeps us, He smiles on us, He gives us His good gifts and His peace.

We are sent on our way usually with “traveling” music and with joy in our hearts and on our faces!!