

Guide

TO THE DIVINE SERVICE

Eden was where the story of God and His people began (Genesis 1) and the new Eden will be where God is reunited with us forever (Revelation 22). In the meantime, God gathers us to Himself through the Divine Service, which gets its name from His divine service to us. As it was in Eden, He talks to us through His Word and we speak back to Him through prayer and song. The Church, like the Garden of Eden, is also where He provides for us through the fruit of His holy body and blood from the Tree of Life, the cross. Everything in the Divine Service proclaims that God speaks to us with His Word of forgiveness, consolation, and love and nourishes us with His life-giving Sacrament. From her beginnings, the Church has always gathered around Christ and His gifts (Acts 2:42), so we, too, gather together for this historic liturgy that tells us that God has brought us back to Eden. Welcome home!



THE PREPARATORY

INVOCATION

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

The Lord begins His Divine Service by stamping His name upon us again as He did at our Baptism. It marks us as His community that is here to receive His service to us, not to give our own or to receive anyone else's.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

[John 20:19-23]

Knowing that God is now with us, we may be fearful on account of our many sins. However, He comes to us in blessing with the personal message that we are forgiven through the application of Christ's atoning sacrifice to us.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

KYRIE ~ *Lord, Have Mercy*

Mark 10:47

In the ancient world, when the king would come to a town his subjects would cry out to him, “Lord, have mercy.” When Jesus, the King of kings, traveled about, those with ailments of body and soul would cry to Him. As the King comes to us, we too cry out to Him, who has shown us mercy through Holy Absolution and will continue to do so in the Divine Service.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS ~ *Glory to God in the Highest* *Luke 2:14; John 1:29*

When Emmanuel (“God with us”) came to earth at His birth to save us, the heavens erupted into this song. Now that He is with us, incarnate in His Word and Sacrament, we share in that same song, praising Him for His salvation.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

2 Timothy 4:22

The Salutation is shared here before the reading of the Word and will be heard again before the celebration of the Sacrament in the Preface. It is the pastor’s alert that the Lord is with us in both ways (Word and Sacrament). In response, the congregation says, “And with your spirit” as an acknowledgment that the Lord through ordination has set His Spirit upon the pastor to serve them with these gifts. The Collect of the Day is a “collection” of the prayers of the faithful centered around the theme of the Readings.

OLD TESTAMENT READING

The Old Testament teaches us about God’s work of salvation prior to Christ’s birth. This lesson prepares us to hear the Gospel lesson, where the Old Testament prophecies and promises are fulfilled in Christ.

EPISTLE READING

The Epistles record the lives and teachings of the early apostles. They are both instructional and inspirational. This lesson often shows God’s Word actively creating faith, providing forgiveness, and strengthening believers.

HOLY GOSPEL READING

The Holy Gospel is where history repeats itself. As we hear about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, He makes that history come alive for us. He is present in His Word to proclaim His ever relevant message to us just as He did to His audience two thousand years ago.

SERMON

The sermon is the proclamation and application of the Readings to the congregation. It draws out the messages of both the Law, which convicts us of our sins, and the Gospel, which delivers Christ's saving death and resurrection to us.

CREED

The creed is a spoken summary of the Christian faith, which was just proclaimed in the Readings and the Sermon. The three creeds, Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian, unify us and all Christians together as we confess who God is and what He has done for us in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

[1 Timothy 2:1-4]

Just as Christ is our intercessor before His Father in heaven, so too do we as the Body of Christ intercede boldly, approaching God on behalf of those in the Church and the world.

OFFERING

Having been graciously gifted by God, we are reminded that all things are from Him and are to be used for His purposes. The Offering gives us a chance to bless others as we have been richly blessed.

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

PREFACE

2 Timothy 4:22; [Colossians 3:1]; [Psalm 136]

This dialogue between pastor and people is first recorded in A.D. 220. It reminds us that the Lord is with us in the bread and wine of the Sacrament. We therefore join our hearts to Him and thank Him for His gifts to us.

SANCTUS ~ *Holy, Holy, Holy*

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9

God met Isaiah in the temple and today He meets us in the new temple of His Body, the Church. For Isaiah, a seraphim flew to touch his lips and take away his sins, but for us Christ Himself touches our lips with His forgiving body and blood. In the first half of the Sanctus, we enter into the very heavenly chorus that Isaiah heard, singing the threefold "holy." The second half echoes the hosannas of Palm Sunday because our King rides into the new Jerusalem of His Church on the lowly means of bread and wine to give us a share in His death and resurrection, just as He entered Jerusalem humbly on a donkey's colt to accomplish our salvation.

THE LORD'S PRAYER*Matthew 6:9-13*

In the Lord's Prayer we pray that His "kingdom come," His "will be done on earth as it is in heaven," that He would "give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses," and that we would be led "not into temptation," but He would "deliver us from evil." In a moment, God will answer that prayer as His gracious will is done on earth as it is in heaven. In the Sacrament, His kingdom comes among us, providing us with our daily bread, forgiving us our trespasses, leading us out of temptation, and delivering us from evil.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD*Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Corinthians 11*

Christ gathers us with His disciples in the upper room and re-presents the Supper to us of His true body and blood for our forgiveness. He does this through His Word, for His Word does what it promises.

PAX DOMINI ~ *The Peace of the Lord**John 20:19*

When Christ's body and blood are held up, we hear the same words that He spoke to the disciples at His resurrection, "Peace be with you." As we join the witnesses to the resurrection by gazing upon our risen Lord in the Sacrament, we have peace with God.

AGNUS DEI ~ *Lamb of God**John 1:29*

Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, takes His seat on His altar-throne in the Sacrament. We sing to Him because He reigns among us, offering to us His sacrificed body and blood to take away our sin.

NUNC DIMITTIS ~ *Song of Simeon**Luke 2:29-32*

Simeon waited to see his Messiah with his own eyes and to hold Him before he died. Similarly, we see our Savior in the bread and wine and hold Him in our very own hands. Having been freed from our sins, we may "depart in peace" having "seen the salvation" which He has prepared for us.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

We pray that having been gifted with God's love, grace, and mercy through the Sacrament that we, ourselves, would be gifts in the lives of those we meet and embody the Christ whom we have received.

BENEDICTION*Numbers 6:24-26*

The Lord dismisses us back into the world the same way He ushered us into His own kingdom in the Divine Service through the Invocation: with His name. He marks us again as His own to go with us and bless us each day.
