DECEMBER 2022

GOOD NEWS from Christ Lutheran Church

Christ Lutheran Church
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Inserts:
Calendars

Issues, Etc.
Talk Radio for the Thinking Christian
www.issuesetc.org

Sacred Music 24/7
lutheranpublicradio.org

Lutheran Doctrine: Christ-Centered, Cross-Focused

From the Pastor

Access to God's Grace Dr John W Kleinig

Australian Lutheran College 104 Jeffcott St, North Adelaide

Some years ago I saw a rather gripping Australian film called **The Last Wave**. It was set in Sydney and told the story of well-educated secular young man who had become aware of the supernatural realm by his association with a group of urban Aborigines in Redfern. In the middle of the film, he visited his stepfather, an Anglican priest, and tried to get help from him in dealing with his experiences. In exasperation he said to the hapless man, "Dad, you never told me that there were any mysteries." Indignant, the father replied, "That's not true! I've tried to explain the mysteries of Christianity to you again and again." At this the son exclaimed, "You never explained them, Dad; you explained them away!"

We modern people tend to confuse mysteries with secrets. And so we explain them away. But they are really quite different. Even though both have to do with something that is hidden and unknown, a mystery differs from a secret in one important respect. A secret remains a secret only as long as you don't know it. Once it is revealed it ceases to be a secret. But a mystery remains a mystery even when it is revealed. In fact, the more you know about it, the more mysterious it becomes. You may be able to explain it, but you can never explain it away.

My basic contention is that when we who are disciples of Christ gather together for worship, we are involved in a great mystery, something hidden from our sight and all our other senses, something invisible and yet real. St Paul speaks of it in this way in Col 1:25-28:

> "I became the servant (of the church), according to God's commission that was given me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the **mystery** that has been kept hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of **this mystery**, which is **Christ among you**, the hope of glory."

Here the apostle depicts himself as a mystagogue, a person who initiates others into a mystery. That mystery is the dwelling of the risen Lord Jesus with his people in the church. Paul discloses that mystery to the saints, those who are united with Christ and so share in his holiness. He reveals the presence and activity of the risen Lord to them by preaching God's word to them, the gospel that proclaims Christ and brings "life and immortality to light" for its hearers (2 Tim 1:10). Apart from God's word, they have no access to the risen Lord Jesus; they have no knowledge or experience of him. That word initiates them into the mystery of Christ, something that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has ever conceived (1 Cor 2:6-10). The disclosure of his hidden presence gives the faithful a glimpse of glory, a foretaste of heaven here on earth.

Christian worship depends upon the presence of the risen Lord Jesus. Apart from him, it does not work properly, nor can it work properly. He works in it and makes it work. We therefore make things difficult for ourselves by focusing on what we do when we assemble for worship. We are, in fact, encouraged to do so

(Continued on page 2)

Voters Meeting, Dec 12, 2022 after Divine Service

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

04 Tamara Hartwig
04 Melanie Hericks
15 Carl Deardoff
16 Carol Brack
20 Ellis Robinson



Life Quotes

December 4 "Christmas is also a time to contemplate the gift of mortal LIFE through the miracle of birth. Christmas is the gift of LOVE that moms and dads shower on their children by saying yes to life—sometimes under very difficult circumstances. Regardless of the challenges, God has a perfect plan for each life that He brings into the world, and His will for them is to out-sparkle and out-shine any ornament." *Bradley Mattes, president of Life Issues Institute – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

December 11 "As sure as Christmas will come again on December 25, our Lord will come again. As we look forward to the Last Day, let's dress for the occasion, putting on godliness and repentance. Let's celebrate everything He did the first time He came to assure us of our home of righteousness. Let's be spiritually awake and alert for His coming again, knowing that we will enjoy God's perfect paradise, our eternal home." *Rev. Peter Sulzle, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

December 18 "Unlike Christmas ornaments, each baby is a unique life never to be replicated in all of history. Each life brutally snuffed out by abortion will leave the world a lesser place for it." *Bradley Mattes, president of Life Issues Institute – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

December 25 "There is no more clear-pointed, rest-giving demonstration of the love of God for you than the gift of His Son." *Paul Tripp, pastor, author, and conference speaker – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

(Continued from page 1)

by the language we use. Take the term worship. It is an odd English invention that is not found in any other language that I know. It translates the biblical term for physical prostration before God and adoration of him. By using it to describe what happens in our services, we concentrate on ourselves and on our activities, rather than on Christ and his gifts to us. We worship Christ; he does not worship us. For most people worship then becomes an act of obedience, human activity, something they need to do in response to what Christ did for them long ago. So something strange occurs. The very churches that preach justification by grace often practice justification by works in their worship. And so the mystery of Christ is obscured; the gate of heaven is shut; present access to God's grace is lost.

When we gather for worship Christ serves us and gives his gifts to us. He involves us in his service of God the Father. Worship is divine service, God's service of us in Christ and our service of God through Christ. Hence it is best to speak about the divine service rather than our worship, for we do not worship an absent Christ who lords it over us from afar, but Christ who is present with us to serve us. All we receive in the divine service comes to us through Christ, just as we act together with Christ in everything that is done in it. It is all a matter of grace, the free gift of God the Father to us in Christ. That's what I would like to explore in this paper on access to God's grace in worship.

1. The Work of Jesus in the Divine Service

The ministry of Jesus as mediator did not end with his ascension. When he ascended he made it quite clear to his apostles that he would be present in the church with his disciples to the close of the age (Matt 28:20). After his ascension he became invisibly present with them in such a way that his presence transcended the normal limitations of time and space and matter (Eph 4:10). In his prologue to the book of Acts Luke goes one step further. He says: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus **began** to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen." The key word here is "began." Luke claims that Jesus continues his ministry in word and deed together with the apostles and their successors in the church. That's why we read from the gospels in the divine service. Those readings from the gospels do not just tell us what Jesus said and did long ago; they tell us what Jesus

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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter article – December 2022

Anxiety vs. Trust

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, teaches those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. Worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and what we're devoted to. It reveals what we trust in.

This is why our Lord begins this section with an overarching principle: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24).

But you say: "I must eat and drink. I must have clothing to wear and have a home in which to dwell." Yes, all these things you need. And Jesus says that your Father in heaven will ensure that you have them. He demonstrates this with a simple argument: your Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air, who neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field, who neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more luxuriously than Solomon in all his glory. If, then, your Father in heaven feeds the birds, if He clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you, when you are worth more than they are? (Matt 6:25–33).

Do you know that you are worth more than them? You are worth infinitely more. You are worth the price of the eternal Son of God. Did the Son of God come down from heaven and become a lily? Did he descend and take on the form of a bird? No! He came down from heaven and became a man: flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone (Gen. 2:23). He is one of us, our brother. And what did He do when He became flesh to dwell among us? He gave His holy, precious blood, through His innocent suffering and death, that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom forever.

God became man in Christ Jesus. He lived the life we failed to live, and He died the death we deserved. He was raised again on the third day overcoming sin and death ... for us. He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. So, if your Father in heaven has given His Son to die for us in order that we might live with Him eternally, how will He not also give us all things to support this body and life?

To be anxious about the necessities of life, to devote yourself to food and clothing, to care about these things and find security in them, is to serve another god. It is to deny that you will live forever because Jesus, the Son of God, is risen from the dead and lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that the God who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son and sanctified you by His Spirit, will not keep His promise to sustain you in this life.

Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). God's kingdom is His rule among us. His rule among us comes when our Father in heaven gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. This is what we ask God to do for us in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need — food and clothing, house and home — and He promises to give it to you. Chief of the things you need is His grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus Christ. So, seek after that. And those who seek will find. And all the necessities of life, our Lord says, will be added to you.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
TREASURER'S REPORT
November 26, 2021

	09/2021	10/2021	11/2021
Deposits:	$ 21,931.62	$ 31,698.73	$ 13,232.18
Disbursements:	$ 11,605.94	$ 11,005.99	$ 11,891.90
Deposit Breakdown:			
General Fund:	$ 11,868.62	$ 23,165.73	$ 13,227.18
Designated Funds:	$ 10,063.00	$ 8,533.00	$ 5.00
Interest:	$ 0.43	$ 0.56	
Monthly Budget Requirement:	$ 12,502.88	$ 15,628.60	$ 12,502.88
Mortgage Balance as of 11/26/2021			$283,442.49



IN OUR PRAYERS

Martin Harms (former member), terminal cancer
Mildred Corey, at home
Helen Kris, Hospitalized
Lisa Johnson, knee replacement surgery
Susan Powell, at home
Mildred Peters at Lyon Specialty Center in Rock Rapids, IA
Leslie & Constance Bartlett at home
Elva Clauson at home

Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding

Lutheran Service Book 345 | study by Steven P. Mueller

Introduction

"Hear ye, hear ye!" the town crier yelled, drawing attention to himself. He then began to proclaim the news that he was commissioned to bring.

"Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" yelled the person selling newspapers on the street, calling customers to buy a copy.

"Act now!" "You may already be a winner." "Click here for details." Such bids from the media of our day seek our attention and action.

Though the methods change, many different voices call out for our attention. They all ask us to listen to them and follow their counsel. But in the midst of all the voices we hear comes a different voice with a more significant message: "Prepare a way for the Lord!"

The hymn we study today brings together many of the themes of Advent, including the message of that herald John the Baptist.

- There are many voices we hear, some of which we should listen to. What voices threaten to distract us from God's call? How can our attention be focused so that we hear what God wants us to hear?
- How are the themes of Advent different from what we hear in our society's "holiday" celebrations?

Exploring the Scriptures

One of the themes addressed by this hymn is the contrast between light and darkness. Read Eph. 5:8–14.

- What does this passage mean by darkness? What are the "unfruitful works of darkness" (v. 11)? What place do darkness and its works have in our lives?
- What does it mean to be "children of light"? What is the source of our light? What effects does this have in our lives?
- Read part of the Benedictus, the song of Zechariah, in Luke 1:76–79. While praising God for the gift of a son, what does Zechariah say about the Light which John will proclaim?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Following customs developed in the early Christian

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Church, many generations of Christians adopted a detailed pattern of worship each day. A system of seven services was developed. These services were used at various times of the day and night. Many thought that this pattern was reflected in the psalms. For example, Ps. 119:164 says, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules." Though not everyone would participate in all of these services, they were diligently followed in monasteries. The Lutheran Confessions rejected the "babbling of the seven canonical hours of prayer" that turned worship into a work (LC preface 3) and cautioned that such a system was a human invention and it was not sinful to omit such services (AC XXVIII 41). Still, Luther urged that Christians be involved in daily worship and devotions, and Lutherans have continued to use several of these offices, including Matins, Vespers and Compline.

In the Middle Ages, as the community gathered for one of the morning offices known as Prime, an Advent custom emerged. On the First Sunday in Advent — the first day of the new Church Year — they would sing "Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding." From then until Christmas Eve, at each service of Prime, they would sing this hymn because it summarized the themes of Advent and called the singers to prepare themselves for their Savior.

Though we do not know the author of this old hymn, it continues to call people to hear the Advent message. Today, many Christians hear this hymn as one of the songs often sung in the famous Service of Lessons and Carols that is broadcast worldwide from King's College Chapel in Cambridge, England, every Christmas Eve. It remains a powerful witness to the message of Advent.

- While the chief service of the congregation is the Divine Service, why is daily worship important? How can we make worship part of our daily lives?
- What value do you see in helping people see the themes and purpose of the seasons of the Church Year? What can our congregation do to bring greater awareness?

Text

This hymn opens by talking about a "thrilling voice." Read Is. 40:3–5 and Luke 3:2b–9.

- What is the thrilling voice? What message does it bring? How would the words of Isaiah's prophecy have heightened excitement when people saw and heard John?
- John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the Messiah. How did he prepare people for the Messiah's first arrival? Does he prepare us to be ready to receive Christ as He comes to us today? Does he help prepare us for the Savior's second coming?
- This hymn describes our natural spiritual state as "works of darkness," "earthbound," and spiritual "sloth." If we were reliant on ourselves, would the coming of the Son of God be good news? How does Jesus take care of us in this situation (see John 1:29)?
- How does this hymn describe our spiritual state without Christ in stanzas 1 and 2? Do these things still characterize us today? Advent reflects on all of Christ's comings: His birth in Bethlehem long ago, His coming to us today through His Word and Sacraments, and His coming at the end of time. Read Matt. 25:31–34, 41 and Luke 21:25–28.
- What two responses will there be to His glorious return? What makes the difference?
- This hymn concludes with a powerful doxology. How is this an appropriate response to Christ's comings?

Making the Connection

The world's "holiday" celebrations, even those called Christmas, can distract from Advent's preparations for us to truly receive the gift of our Savior. The message of Advent, and of this hymn, does not always line up with the experiences of other aspects of our lives.

- How can we keep Advent as a time of real preparation, with our focus on things that truly matter?
- Crowds of people went out into the wilderness to hear John's message, repent and be baptized. Where do we go to hear his message? What is our response?

In Closing

The Baptist calls us to prepare ourselves by acknowledging our sin and lifting our eyes to see the Savior. This is the greatest thing we can do in Advent — or any day of the year. We remember who we are, we look to our Savior. And because of His work, we receive His mercy, love and heavenly pardon.

- Sing or read together LSB 345, "Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding."

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect of the Day, Third Sunday in Advent).

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says and does each Sunday in the assembly of the faithful. There the risen Lord Jesus interacts with us, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, by teaching himself from the Scriptures and hosting his holy supper. That's why his word and his meal are the backbone of the divine service.

Jesus himself taught the twelve apostles about his hidden presence and work with them in the divine service in Matthew 18:18-20. He said:

> "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, **I am there with them**."

Here in typical Jewish style Jesus uses four passive verbs to speak about the work of God the Father in gathering the disciples and answering their prayers as well as in binding and loosing. Scholars call this the divine passive. It was used to avoid the abuse of God's name. Since the early church, this passage has quite rightly been used to teach what happens in the divine service. It emphasises four important aspects of worship. First, as the congregation assembles for worship, God the Father gathers them together. The congregation then is God's assembly, his church (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), people gathered by him in his presence. Secondly, God the Father gathers the congregation together through risen Lord Jesus as they invoke him by name in proclamation and blessing, in prayer and praise. Through Jesus they have access to God's gracious presence. Thirdly, Jesus bridges the gap between heaven and earth for the congregation and creates an asymmetrical synergy between these spheres. Thus, since Jesus is present and active in the congregation, it prays together with Jesus and is involved in his work of reconciliation. God the Father does what the church asks him to do, as it is guided by Christ and his word. Fourthly, the successors of the apostles in the ministry of word and sacrament work together with God the Father and the risen Lord Jesus in their mission of binding and loosing here on earth. They bind the conscience of people by preaching God's law and announcing God's judgment on sin; they loose people from guilt and condemnation by proclaiming the gospel and pardoning sinners (John 20:21-23). They bind the powers of darkness by rebuking them in the name of Jesus; they loose people from the grip of Satan by proclaiming God's word and enacting the sacraments. Thus Jesus involves the church in his administration of God's grace here on earth. In the divine service he includes the church in his work of judging sin and pardoning sinners. Together with Christ his ministers wield the keys of forgiveness that open the door into the Father's presence (Matt 16:19), for only through the forgiveness of sins can sinners approach God the Father unafraid in prayer. Because they have been pardoned and justified they have unrestricted access to his grace in the divine service. Thus the forgiveness that the ministers of the gospel proclaim in Christ's name is the key to God's gracious presence; it gives us access to heaven here on earth.

2.Access to God's Grace through Jesus

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews teaches us about the role of Jesus as our liturgist, our great high priest. He says in 10:19-22:

> Therefore brothers (and sisters), since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us approach (God the Father) with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled (clean) from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Through Jesus, and together with him, we earthlings enter the heavenly sanctuary in the divine service. Because we have been cleansed from sin through baptism we have unrestricted access to God the Father. The way into his presence is open before us. No Israelite ever had this kind of access to God in the tabernacle or at the temple in Jerusalem. There, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest had restricted access to God's presence in the Holy of Holies. In the new covenant we all serve as priests together with Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Together with him we have free access by faith to the Father's presence and his abundant grace. Our high priest Jesus bridges the gap between God and us. He brings God the Father to us just as he brings us to God the Father.

There are two sides to his ongoing work as priest in the divine service. On the one hand, he speaks for God the Father and proclaims his word to us; through his word he brings the Father's grace and gives the Holy Spirit to us. Lutherans call this the **sacramental** side of the divine service; the eastern Orthodox tradition calls this the **descending** work of Christ. On the other hand, Jesus also represents us before God the Father and presents us together with himself to his heavenly Father; he leads us as we respond in faith to what God gives us and does for us in worship. Lutherans call this the **sacrificial** side of the divine service; the eastern Orthodox tradition calls it the **ascending** work Christ. The sacramental side of worship always comes first. It is foundational.

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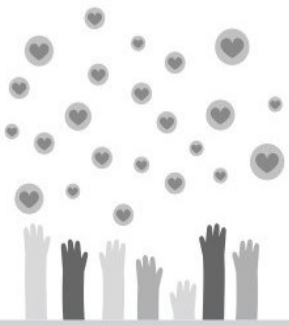
KIDS IN THE DIVINE SERVICE

What is the "Offertory"?

The word "offertory" comes from the Latin word "offerre," which means "to give, or to present." The Offertory is sung by the congregation during the Divine Service as the gifts and offerings are presented to the Lord.

Why do we use the Offertory?

Take a look at the words from the following Offertory: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? ... I will take the cup of salvation and will call upon the name of the Lord." These words from Psalm 116 tell us that the greatest way to praise and thank God for all of His goodness is not the offerings and gifts that we give, but that in faith we continue to receive what He gives us in His Word and Sacraments. Receiving God's gifts isn't just a part of worshiping God, it is the greatest worship of God! Wow! What a wonderful and giving God we have!



Parents: Encourage your children to listen to the words of the Offertory as it is sung. Notice that such words are sung right before the Lord's Supper is prepared and distributed. Here we are receiving the "cup of salvation" full of the Father's grace through the precious blood of His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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The sacrificial side depends on it, just as you can only hear speech if someone speaks to you, and you can only receive gifts if something is given to you. We can speak to God only because God speaks to us; we can give only as we receive from God.

So Jesus initiates everything in our worship. There he comes to us and gives his gifts to us; there he speaks the life-giving, Spirit-filling word of God the Father to us in the divine service. Through that word which is spoken in proclamation and enacted in Holy Communion, he brings us grace and peace, pardon and life from God the Father. St Paul speaks about this sacramental aspect of worship in Rom 5:1-2:

"Therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained **access to this grace** in which we now stand."

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UPCOMING

2022

- Dec 03 Decorate Church, TBD
- Dec 03 Caroling, TBD
- Dec 07, 14, Advent Services 7 pm
- Dec 11: Voters Meeting, after Divine Service
- Dec 21 Children's Christmas Service 5pm
- December 24 Christmas Eve service, 5pm
- December 25 Christmas Day Service 9:30 am
- No New Year's Eve/Day Service

2023

- Jan 06, Epiphany Divine Service 7pm
- Feb 22 Ash Wednesday Divine Service, 7pm
- Mar 01, 08, 15, 22, 29 Midweek Lenten service, 7pm (Dinner prior)
- Mar 12 Daylight Savings Time Begins, 2am
- Mar 12 Voters Meeting
- Apr 06 Maundy Thursday Divine Service, 7pm
- Apr 07 Good Friday Tenebrae Service, 7pm
- Apr 09 Easter Sunrise Matins Service, 7am
- Apr 09 Easter Breakfast, 8am
- Apr 09 Easter Festival Divine Service, 9:30am
- May 14 Mothers' Day Breakfast
- May 18 Ascension Day Divine Service 7pm
- June 11 Voters Meeting
- July 23-27 VBS
- Sept 10 Voters Meeting
- Nov 05 Daylight Saving Time Ends, 2am
- Nov 23 Thanksgiving Day Divine Service, 9:30 am
- Dec 06, 13, 20 Advent Services, 7pm
- Dec 20 Children's Christmas Service 7pm
- December 24 Christmas Eve service, 5pm
- December 25 Christmas Day Service 9:30 am
- No New Year's Eve/Day Service

(Continued from page 7)

That describes what God now does for us and gives to us in the divine service. Since we are justified by faith, we now have access to the grace of God the Father. We have this access through Christ; we receive all God's gifts to us through him. God the Father holds nothing back from us; he offers us everything that belongs to Jesus: peace and joy, fellowship and love, salvation and eternal life, the Holy Spirit and all other heavenly blessings (Eph 1:4). They are all available to us in faith. We may therefore come as beggars with empty hands to receive what he gives to us out of his abundance in the divine service. It is all grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing. That's why the writer to the Hebrews offers us this encouragement (4:14,16):

"Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens…let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may **receive mercy** and find **grace** to help in time of need."

Our worship then is, first and foremost, much more a matter receiving rather than of giving. It is God's doing; it involves us in a descending Trinitarian transaction, an act of condescension in which God the Father comes down to us and gives us the Holy Spirit through the words and deeds of Jesus in the divine service.

Jesus, however, is just as involved in our sacrificial response to God's giving as he is in God's sacramental giving to us. Just as Jesus brings the Father to us, so he also brings us to the Father. He does this by giving us the Holy Spirit so that we, in faith, can respond appropriately to God's grace. St Paul sums up this sacrificial side of the divine service quite succinctly in Eph 2:17-18:

"Jesus came and proclaimed peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off and peace to you (Jews) who were near, for through him both of us have **access** in one Spirit **to the Father**."

We do not respond to God the Father by ourselves and approach him in our own right. How could we ever do that! Since Christ is our high priest who has joined himself to us in baptism and now shares his holiness with us, we join with him in his self- offering to God the Father. We stand in his shoes and identify ourselves with him. Since Christ presents us with himself to the Father, we can offer ourselves and our bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1-2). Since Christ lives to intercede for us, we can pray together with him, as we do in the Lord's Prayer, and we can be sure that our prayers are pleasing to God. That's why we pray **in the name of Jesus** and we present our petitions to God the Father **through** Jesus Christ our Lord. Since Jesus lives to glorify his heavenly Father, we can thank and praise and glorify God the Father **through** him. All this is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ sanctifies us and our offerings with his Holy Spirit, so that we can present them as "spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5). Spiritual sacrifices are motivated by faith in Jesus and produced in us by his Holy Spirit.

So then, our worship depends totally on Jesus and his presence with us. Without him we have no access to God's grace; through him we have ongoing access to the fullness of God's grace, grace abounding, grace that flows out into us and through us like a never-ending spring.

3.Conclusion

Remember the story of Jacob's ladder. In his flight from Esau Jacob had come to a place called Bethel. There he fell asleep and had a vision of a stairway that reached up to heaven. Since the angels of God descended and ascended on it, he realised that this place was the gate of heaven. This stairway was remarkable because on it God came down from heaven to join Jacob and met with him there on earth. Jacob did not climb up the stairway to meet with God; God came down the stairway to bless Jacob.

Jesus applies that story to himself in John 1:51. He says:

"Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

He is the stairway of heaven, the heavenly escalator by which God reaches down to us and brings us to himself. Through Jesus God the Father descends to us in the divine service to meet with us and bless us with his Holy Spirit; through Jesus we ascend to God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. In worship we are involved in that mystery, that wonderful transaction, that Trinitarian dynamic, for all three persons of the Holy Trinity are equally present and active in the divine service. This means that our worship is all God's doing and our doing things together with God. It is God's free gift to us. In it we receive grace upon grace from God's fullness (John 1:16), for through Christ we have unrestricted access to God the Father and his grace in the Holy Spirit. The mystery of worship is Christ with us, our access to grace and our hope of glory.

