



### *Preface and Sanctus*

As part of our continuing series on the services of the Lutheran Church, we will now look at the second half of the service: the **Preface** and **Sanctus**. The Word of God has been preached and heard, and now we prepare to receive Jesus who comes to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

How does the good gift of Christ's sacrifice for our sins upon the cross some 2,000 years ago become our good gift today? Through the Sacraments. In Romans 6, St Paul tells us how Baptism ties us to Jesus' death and resurrection, and in I Corinthians 11 he also reminds us that as we partake of the bread and the cup of Holy Communion, we proclaim Christ's death for our sins until He comes again. In Holy Communion we are given the gifts of that holy cross, Christ's own body and blood in, with, and under that consecrated bread and wine.

In Holy Communion we receive Jesus! His body and blood, which was sacrificed for us on Calvary's cross, raised from the grave on Easter morning, and now is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, comes to us, bringing us every blessing for eternity!

As we prepare for the Sacrament of the Altar, the **Preface** calls us to acknowledge that something supernatural is now occurring before us. The Pastor says, "*The Lord be with you!*" Indeed, Jesus is here to bless you! And the congregation responds that Jesus is also with the Pastor, too! "*And with your spirit!*" Together, Pastor and people, we are in the presence of our most holy Lord God!

"*Lift up your hearts!*" We are not only on earth anymore, dear Christian. Christ is here with us, and where Christ is, so is the heavenly host. They are here with us. This is no other place than heaven on earth! Lift up your hearts, that is, your whole inner being to recognize what is going on, where we are. Recognizing this truth, the congregation responds, "*We lift them up unto the Lord.*" Yes, in truth, we are in heaven with the Lord!

The Pastor then invites the congregation, "*Let us give thanks unto the Lord,*" to which the congregation agrees, "*It is good and right so to do.*"

This is the oldest part of our Sunday Liturgy. We have evidence from Hippolytus, one of the ancient church fathers from the 200's A.D., that this exchange between Pastor and people is very old. The Church used this exchange many years before he wrote it down, meaning that it could have been in use by the first century Church in the time of the Apostles! This exchange continues with a beautiful prayer, the Proper Preface, which changes with the season. This Preface and Proper Preface all focuses our attention on giving thanks to our Triune God, who works all things for our good and for our salvation through Jesus Christ.

It is good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to our God! We do not give thanks alone, but together with angels and archangels, alongside the host of heaven, including those members of the Church Triumphant whose souls live in eternal presence with Jesus, and together we all sing this praise and thanksgiving as we receive Christ's good gifts!

The **Sanctus** is the song of thanksgiving which acknowledges the miracle that is now occurring in Holy Communion. It combines the song of the angels and seraphim from Isaiah 6 when Isaiah saw the throne room of the Lord God: "*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth (that is, the angelic hosts).*" Added to their song is the song of the pilgrims at Passover sang when they welcomed Jesus as King into Jerusalem: "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes to save us! Hosanna!*" (continued)

The songs of angels and men collide as we welcome Jesus into our midst, not just in word, but now in Sacrament, too! Jesus is truly here to bless us and to save us, and it is good, right, and salutary that we should sing His praise and adore Him with Thanksgiving (which is what the word, Eucharist, means, if you have heard that term used to describe the Lord's Supper)!

Next month we will look at the Words of Institution themselves and how we respond to that Good News from Jesus!

In Christ's service,  
Rev Joel V. Kuhl, Pastor