



## Lord's Prayer, Words of Institution & Agnus Dei

In our monthly newsletters I have been going through the Order of the Divine Service we use on Sunday mornings. We have now come to the high point of the whole service: Holy Communion.

As we approach the Altar of our Lord Jesus, bread and wine are set apart and consecrated with the Words of Jesus' Institution: *"Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."* What do these words mean? What is happening at this very moment of Holy Communion?

Jesus is here giving us His true body in, with, and under the bread to eat. Jesus is here giving us His true blood in, with, and under the wine to drink. All of this for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus is here! Truly present on this altar, in, with, and under this bread and wine for us to take and eat and drink. Jesus has come among us to fill us with His own holiness and righteousness! This is a truly awesome point in the Divine Service.

Throughout the centuries there have been various ways to honour our Lord Jesus who comes to us in bread and wine. You will note that I kneel during the Words of Institution, not to honour the bread, but to honour Jesus who is truly here in His body and blood. You, too, kneel as you come forward at the railing and honour Jesus who comes to you to fill you with His life and salvation.

Also, when we use Divine Service, Setting Three, which is the old communion service from *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, you will note that the Words of Institution are set to music. I love to sing, and so I do sing these words when we use Setting Three, but this is not just my preference. This wasn't even just from 1941. It comes from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther himself, who wanted the words of Jesus sung loudly so that all the people could hear they what say. Chanting enabled voices to

carry in days before amplification, but chanting also slows down the words, and by rising and falling in timbre at set places, also emphasizes the key words!

You see, before Luther, the Roman church whispered these words of Jesus only to the elements; the people rarely, if ever heard them. Luther said the Gospel must ring out! People need to hear what is happening here at the height of the Divine Service, why Holy Communion is such a wonderful gift from our Lord! They are Jesus' own words, His promise of His very body and blood given to us for our forgiveness and salvation! This is Good News we all need to hear! So he set the Words of Institution to the same musical pointing used for the chanting of the Holy Gospel. This was the KEY Gospel to hear! And so it was sung proudly by Lutherans for many generations.

And so, with such tremendous words of Jesus being the highlight of the Divine Service, what possible prayers or songs could surround them? The Lord's Prayer, for one. Jesus' own prayer, given to us to pray with Jesus to 'Our Father' who is in heaven, giving in this sacrament the most precious daily bread! And as for song? How about words of John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, newly baptized by water and the Holy Spirit, as the true *"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"*? These two key liturgical parts have surrounded the Words of Institution for many centuries and will continue until our Lord Jesus returns on the Last Day!

Next month, we will look at Luther's great addition to the Divine Service liturgy, the *Nunc Dimittis*.

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

