

Worship 101: Conclusion

This is our final installment of Worship 101. We will be looking at the concluding parts of the Service of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the Benediction.

After the pastor repeats the words of institution in the Lord's Supper the congregation sings what is known as the Agnus Dei. Agnus Dei is Latin for "Lamb of God" which is how this little song (canticle) begins: "Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us."

The Agnus Dei was introduced into the communion liturgy back in the year 725 AD. It is based on John 1:29 where John the Baptist says of Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." These words are very fitting for Jesus is now present on the altar with His body and blood to take our sins away, that is to forgive our sins as we hear and believe these words along with our eating of Christ's body and the drinking of His blood: "Given for you, shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins."

After the congregation has received the body and blood of Christ with the bread and the wine we sing what's called the Post-Communion Canticle: "Thank the Lord." (The word canticle is Latin for "little song"). It is based on Psalm 105:1-3, 42-43. Here we give thanks to God for the forgiveness of sins that we have received by faith given to us in the Lord's Supper.

Next we pray what is known as the Post-Communion prayer. Having been forgiven and spiritually strengthened through Holy Communion the congregation expresses its saving faith: "...we implore you to strengthen us in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another." Trust in God and love for our neighbor are the fruits of saving faith. That is, through Holy Communion we are empowered to live a God pleasing life.

Our Divine Service ends with what is known as the "Benediction." This word comes from two Latin terms: bene, meaning "good" and diction meaning "word." So the benediction is the good word from God to His people.

The benediction is taken from Numbers 6:24-26. This was the blessing that Aaron was to give to the Israelites: "The Lord bless you and keep you..." The other benediction that we use for the Matins Service comes from St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13:14: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

We hope that this series on worship has helped to make what we do on Sunday mornings more meaningful for you. God bless you as you come each week to hear God speak to you in the Divine Service.

In Christ,
Pastor Bloom