

**KEEPING THE TRINITY IN THE DIVINE SERVICE**

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We have found ourselves in an American context in which we struggle with an identity crisis. Roman Catholics have laid claim to the title “Catholic,” but they declare the bishop of Rome to be Christ’s Vicar on earth, reject the pure preaching of the gospel, and discard the article of justification. On the other hand, American Evangelicals have high jacked the title “Evangelical,” but they sever ties with the historic church, deny the efficacy of the sacraments, and confuse the article of justification with sanctification. To be clear, we should refer to those who are loyal to the bishop of Rome as Romanists and those who are devoted to the over emphasis upon certain sections of divine truth as sectarians. Yet, for some strange reason, we have willingly given up the title catholic and try ever-so-hard to identify ourselves as evangelicals. This identity crisis is made most evident in the temptation to embrace the worship styles of our protestant contemporaries. At stake is not just a style adjustment; rather, what hangs in the balance is whether or not we are going to give up our inherited catholic liturgy and exchange it for sectarian worship. Keep in mind that each sect’s own emphasis upon a certain section of doctrine is made manifest in the way in which that group worships. Are we really willing we give up our birthright for plain bread and bowl of lentil soup? This concern should resonate in the ears of Lutherans who have maintained since the 16<sup>th</sup> century that we are catholic and neither Romanists nor sectarian.<sup>1</sup> The Lutherans of ages past would not even allow others to label them as sectarian, yet in our day we want to look and act just like them. We have forgotten that the sectarians are the ones who deny the means of grace and justification through faith alone which is foundational to the catholic liturgy. Catholic liturgy flows from the catholic faith while sectarian worship flows from the beliefs of the various sects. Due to the fact that sectarian worship does not confess and teach the catholic faith, it must be avoided.

**Being Lutheran, that is, Being Catholic**

What is the fundamental difference between sectarian worship and catholic liturgy? It rests in the adherence to the first article of the Augsburg Confession. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught and confessed in the historic catholic liturgy while it is ignored in contemporary sectarian worship. Now of course, sectarian churches may confess the doctrine of the Trinity on paper, but it is not made manifest in the public service in which they gather to worship the one True God. It would be like saying that in the Catechism we declare that Christians should pray, be baptized, receive communion, and confess their sins, but in real life we would refrain from praying, baptizing, communing, and confessing our sins. If the belief in the mystery of the Trinity is not tangible in the sectarian worship service, then it is not a true worship service of the

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<sup>1</sup> There is no need to split hairs by maintaining a false dichotomy between catholic substance and evangelical style. To be truly catholic is to be truly evangelical.

one True God. Could one easily distinguish the difference between a sectarian worship service, a Unitarian worship service, a Mormon worship service, a Jehovah's Witness Service, or a Jewish worship service? It is sad to say, but an individual could attend a sectarian worship service for years and never learn about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

As Lutherans, we are catholic and not sectarian. We believe, teach, and confess in the words of the Athanasian Creed that, "Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish eternally. And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance." This creed goes on to affirm, "It is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." The ceremonies of the church should teach all that we need to know about Christ for salvation. In order to do so they must teach that He is the second person of the Blessed Holy Trinity. We do not confess a Christ apart from the Trinity. Any new form of worship that does not teach and confess the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is sectarian worship and must be avoided.

### **Confirming our Catholicity in the Confessions**

In fact, the purpose of the Lutheran Confessions was to affirm that we are catholic and not sectarian. The Book of Concord opens with the first article of the Augsburg Confession in which we declare that we are catholic by laying the foundation of our teaching in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Without reservation, we firmly declare that, "We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> After laying this firm foundation, we boldly begin the second half of the Augsburg Confession by saying, "From the above it is manifest that nothing is taught in our churches concerning articles of faith that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures or what is common to the Christian [catholic] church."<sup>3</sup> And again, "...we have related only matters which we have considered it necessary to adduce and mention in order that it may be made very clear that we have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian [catholic] church."<sup>4</sup> Also we once again state that, "After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ."<sup>5</sup>

In the Apology we assert that we have preserved the catholic liturgy. We state, "To begin with, we must repeat the prefatory statement that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the

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<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Concord*, ed. T.G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc.”<sup>6</sup> We keep these liturgical forms because they rightly teach us all we need to know about Christ for our salvation. Furthermore we say, “The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray.”<sup>7</sup> Take note that we also close the Concordia with the last article of the Solid Declaration in which we condemn the teachings of the sectarians who claim to be evangelical but are not. Namely, we condemn the teachings of the Anti-Trinitarians. One cannot faithfully read the Concordia without acknowledging that we retain the traditional liturgical forms because they teach and confess the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, and justification.

### **Looking to the Sectarians as Our Teachers**

From the world of the sectarians, we have been bombarded with the rationale for why we need to provide seeker sensitive services. These pious thoughts come from a desire to be truly evangelical and they manifest themselves in new styles of worship that are tailored to engage the unbelieving world. On the surface, this mindset appears to be rather evangelical. We confess in the Augsburg Confession, “After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is for teaching the people what they need to know about Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, notice that the purpose of the ceremonies that we use in the church is to teach about Christ. The real determining factor for the use of any ceremony is not personal preferences for musical instruments, but rather the effectiveness of teaching about Christ for salvation. You cannot reach the lost with the message of salvation if you do not rightly teach the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is disturbing to note that the most significant component of the debates over the so-called styles of worship has not even been discussed.

We have absorbed the debates found in sectarian circles over the legitimate use of traditional or contemporary styles of worship. Their debates are truly about the style of music. They argue over the effectiveness of bringing in different generations through the use of different types of music that speak to those generations. That is not our debate. Our debate and concern has always been whether or not the ceremonies that we use actually teach people what they need to know about Christ. On this principle alone, Luther reformed the Mass. In a time not too long ago, Luther was our teacher and the way in which we come before our God was formed by the creeds.

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<sup>6</sup> Tappert, p.249.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

## Confessing the Catholic Creeds

Of course, the clearest and most concise teaching of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught in the liturgy through confessing of the catholic creeds. When sectarians remove the creeds from their forms of worship, it sets the stage for the absence of the Trinity in their orders of service. In the catholic liturgy, the creeds are the fountain from which flows the way in which we pray, praise, and give thanks. The creeds articulate the significance of the incarnation giving to us the proper understanding of the plurality of persons in the Godhead while maintaining the unity of the divine essence.

The Apostles' Creed is the simplest of the creeds. For catechetical purposes, Luther broke the creed up into three articles (one for each person of the Trinity). In this over simplification, we learn that the Father has made me, the Son has redeemed me, and the Holy Spirit has sanctified me. So that we do not become confused we must keep in mind Luther's own warning that all three persons of the Blessed Trinity were active in creation, redemption, and sanctification.

The Nicene Creed teaches us not to confuse the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit while at the same time not to divide the divine essence. Only the Son is begotten of His Father before all worlds. He is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. Only the Son was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, rose again, and ascended into heaven. Only the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

The Athanasian Creed gives the most clarity and understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet, it is sad to say that it is only used in the public service on Trinity Sunday if at all. I would assert that just as the sectarians failed to utilize the catholic creeds giving rise to an absence of the teaching on the Trinity in their worship services, the failure to utilize the Athanasian Creed in the catholic liturgy will give rise to an inability to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity to an unbelieving world. Please keep in mind that this is an era of confusion about the Trinity. Most sectarians do not stress the doctrine of the Trinity which leads to Unitarianism, Modalism, and personal false teachings such as those seen in William Young's book *The Shack*. In addition, don't forget the threat from outside of the church through persistent pressures by Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Muslims. I would encourage those congregations who do not use the Athanasian Creed in their liturgy at all to begin using it on Trinity Sunday. Of course, this will provide the perfect launching pad for an emphasis on the clear confession of the doctrine of the Trinity. For those who currently confess it on Trinity Sunday, I would encourage you to confess it on the Sunday in which you celebrate the baptism of our Lord. For those of you who already speak it twice a year, I would encourage you to use it a third time, namely on Reformation Sunday. In this way, you will be able to teach that Lutherans are catholic that is those who worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. If the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not correctly taught, then the doctrine of the Incarnation will not be purely confessed. If the

incarnation is not purely confessed, then the doctrine of Justification will not be rightly understood.

### **The Sectarian Worship and the Absence of the Trinity**

When it comes to the lack of teaching on the Trinity, most notably in the sectarian worship service is the removal of the catholic creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian). Understand that the emphasis of the sects gravitates toward deeds and not creeds. Sectarian worship at its finest overlooks the doctrine of the Trinity or at its foulest teaches a different doctrine completely. Take any sectarian worship service and count the times that the Holy Trinity is even mentioned. Most likely, the only time that the Trinity would be even alluded to would be if one of the hymns sung that day just happened to be "Holy, Holy, Holy" or just maybe the topic of the sermon was on the Trinity. On the other hand, the catholic liturgy is bursting at the seams with the teaching of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity from the first words spoken to that last words delivered. Sectarian worship services leave the worshiper with at best an understanding of God the Father and God the Son without the person of the Holy Spirit and at worst the Unitarian idea of God and His Son Jesus who is not God.

In between these two extremes, sectarian worship at times teaches that Jesus is God without the person of the Father or the Holy Spirit while at other times it teaches that the Holy Spirit is God without the person of the Father or the Son. Whether one has 1/3 or 2/3 of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, the individual is left without the Triune God. Keep in mind that if one does not have the Triune God, then one does not have the True God. Our catholic liturgy, on the other hand, rightly confesses and teaches Christ as the second person of the Holy Trinity who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A typical sectarian worship service, by its very nature, does not maintain the liturgical components of the ancient church and is thus very fluid. This fluidity leads to an inconsistency in teaching. One service might teach Sabellianism, another might teach Manichaeism, and another might teach Arianism. Such heretical teachings about God might be found over the course of three consecutive services at the same congregation. It is difficult to study in detail a sectarian worship service due to the fact that it mainly consists of songs, prayers, and a message that are different each week. Characteristically, sectarian worship begins with a call to worship (i.e. "Here I am to Worship"), an opening prayer (Usually done literally, "in the name of Jesus."), a praise song (i.e. "Hear Our Praises"), a musical offering (i.e. "Tithes and Offerings"), a message, a prayer, and a closing song (i.e. "Trust and Obey"). Depending upon the flavor of sectarianism, these songs will either focus on God in the generic, or the person of Jesus, or on the person of the Holy Spirit. In such an arrangement, the only way for the doctrine of the Trinity to be confessed and taught is through the remote chance that a prayer or a song might possibly reference the Trinity. Prayers might be prayed to the Father in the name of the Son, but rarely is the Holy Spirit even mentioned unless the petition is requesting a guiding, leading, or anointing by the Spirit. Yet, the mere listing off of three persons in and of itself does not teach the doctrine

of the Holy Trinity.<sup>9</sup> Instead it leads to confusion resulting in Theism or Modalism.<sup>10</sup> The most common place to find the teaching of the mystery of the Trinity in a sectarian worship service is during a baptism, assuming that they are not using the name of Jesus only formula.

Please understand that there is a current love fest in the sectarian ranks with modalism in which God is now in the mode of the Spirit without the person of the Father or the Son. Worshipers seek to experience God by feeling the presence of the Spirit. Thus, the music of the sectarian worship service itself becomes the channel through which God's presence is invoked and experienced. Ironically, when such worshipers gather to come into the presence of the LORD, they feel no need to confess their sins.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Catholic Liturgy and the Presence of the Holy Trinity**

The catholic liturgy teaches that God is one without dividing the divine essence and that God is Triune without confusing the persons. We learn to make a distinction in the plurality of persons who are coequal, coeternal, and coessential.<sup>12</sup> The first words spoken in the liturgy is the Triune name of God. We have been gifted with the name of God and the revelation of the Holy Trinity. We have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for "name" (ὄνομα) is in the singular which teaches us the Unity of the divine essence. Yet, there are three distinct persons that are named: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who are given equal honor and glory.<sup>13</sup>

It is most fitting that we prepare to come into the presence of the Triune God by hearing the words given to us in our baptism. In the baptism of Jesus, we have the fullness of the revelation of God. The Son is sent by the Father being incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin. Here we learn the distinction in persons between the Father who sends and the Son who is sent. Only the Son took upon flesh and blood in order to be the atoning sacrifice. The Father was not

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in Chris Tomlin's song *How Great is Our God* there is a stanza that states, "The Godhead Three in One, Father Spirit Son, The Lion and the Lamb, The Lion and the Lamb." This stanza falls short of confessing the mystery of the Trinity. Rather than confess Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, it confuses. How are the three one? Are the Lion and the Lamb two different persons? Are they one like the three in one? Are they two in one?

<sup>10</sup> For example, in Chris Tomlin's song *Your Grace is Enough* the song is sung to God in the generic which could reference any god. In Kari Jobe's song *The More I Seek You* the song is sung to an undetermined "you." In the Hillsong *From the Inside Out* worshipers sing to the Lord in the generic. Anyone of these three songs could be sung by a non-Trinitarian with no problem. Now of course, I am not suggesting that all songs sung in the Divine Service must have an explicit teaching on the Holy Trinity. We know that not all the hymns in our *Lutheran Service Book* are precise expositions on the Athanasian Creed. However, many of our hymns are fortified with stanzas that teach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The problem arises when the theological framework of the catholic liturgy is removed which anchors the songs that are sung to the confession of the Blessed Trinity.

<sup>11</sup> When one proclaims how great God is, the correct response is that we are not great. When we declare who God is and what He has done, it exposes who we are and what we have done. Thus, when we say that God is loving and faithful, we recognize that we are not.

<sup>12</sup> Coessential is used synonymously with the term consubstantial. Coessential means of the same divine essence while consubstantial means of the same divine substance. Both English words are used to convey the Greek word ὁμοουσία.

<sup>13</sup> It was the false teacher Sabellius who had overemphasized the unity of God resulting in the false teaching that there was one person and three names. This false teaching became known as modalism.

crucified. The human nature of the Son also distinguishes Him from the person of the Holy Spirit who was not incarnate.

Only the Son stands in the Jordan River to be baptized. The voice from another person distinguishes the Father from the Son whom He is talking about as one talks about another person. The voice also distinguishes the person of the Father from the person of the Spirit who does not speak. The Father says, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” (Matthew 17:5, ESV) The Spirit of God is made visible in the form of a dove distinguishing Him from the person of the Father and the person of the Son. The Son is anointed with the Holy Spirit marking Him as the promised Suffering Servant of the LORD. He is the Christ which means the Anointed One. Here we are taught to make a distinction between the Father who anoints, the Son who is anointed, and the Spirit who is the anointing.<sup>14</sup>

It is the work of all three persons of the Blessed Trinity that bring about our salvation. The revealed knowledge given to us in the baptism of Jesus is tied to individual baptism. St. Paul writes, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,” (Titus 3:4–6, ESV) In this passage, we are taught to make a distinction between the person of the Father, who is referred to as God, the person of the Holy Spirit who was poured out on us, and the person of the Son who is referred to as Jesus Christ who grants us access to the Father through His sacrificial death.

In the catholic liturgy, we come into the presence of the Living God being called by His name. Because we are part of this fallen creation that is in rebellion to its Creator, the liturgy begins with a confession of sin to God. This is commonly referred to as the service of preparation. The Pastor declares, “Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness. Our help is in the name of the Lord.”<sup>15</sup>

It is in Christ that we learn that God and sinner have been reconciled. Thus, we confess our sins before God our merciful Father asking for His mercy for the sake of the death of His beloved Son. Responsively, the Pastor, by virtue of his office, justifies us in the stead and by the command of Jesus. He speaks the name of the Triune God upon us again assuring us that the one who believes and is baptized will be saved. At this point we confidently approach God knowing that we are declared righteous for the sake of Christ. The Apostle Paul teaches us, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God... ..and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love

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<sup>14</sup> Note: Χρίω means I anoint, χρίσμα means anointing, χριστός means the one who is anointed, and a χριστιανός is a Christian.

<sup>15</sup> *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), p. 184 Divine Service, Setting Three and p. 213, Divine Service Setting Five. This is the traditional set of versicles spoken. Settings One and Two use the text from 1John 1:8-9. Setting Three combines Ps. 124:8 with Ps. 130:3-4.

has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:1-2, 5, ESV).<sup>16</sup> Once again we are taught to distinguish between the person of the Father referred to as God, and the person of the Son referred to as our Lord Jesus Christ who grants us access to the Father, and the person of the Holy Spirit who works in our hearts through His word. Without Christ we have no access to the Father. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot believe in Christ for our salvation. Through the hearing of the gospel we receive the Holy Spirit and faith in Christ.

### **Giving Glory to God**

After the service of preparation, we begin the service of the word in which we gather to hear the voice of our Triune God. This portion of the service begins with the Introit. The Introit contains the word of God sung while the man who has been called to the Office of Holy Ministry moves toward the altar to serve before the Lord. The Introit concludes with the Gloria Patri: “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.” These words are also spoken at the end of the Psalm in which we praise the work of the Lord. In the words of the Gloria Patri, we are taught to make a distinction between all three persons of the Holy Trinity while maintaining the unity of the divine essence. We confess and teach that they are coequal. All three persons are given equal honor, praise, and glory. Likewise, we confess and teach that all three persons are coeternal. Their praise extends to the beginning, now, and forever. Because God alone is eternal and He alone rightly receives divine praise, honor, and glory, we confess and teach that the three persons of the Blessed Trinity are consubstantial. They are eternally of the same divine substance. To give divine worship to anything other than the one True Eternal God is idolatry.

The Holy Spirit teaches us through the mouth of St. Paul to give glory to the Father. For instance in the Epistle to the Philippians, the Apostle writes, “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Philippians 4:20, ESV) Likewise, through the mouth of St. John we are taught to give equal honor and glory to the Son. In the *Revelation*, John writes, “To him [Jesus] who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 1:5–6, ESV) And in chapter five he writes,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.” (Revelation 5:12–14, ESV)

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<sup>16</sup> St. Paul connects justification to the incarnation anchored in the revelation of the Blessed Holy Trinity.



This understanding flows into the next liturgical component of the Divine Service. In the Kyrie, we petition the Son to have mercy on us. In this act, we are giving to the Son equal honor, glory, and praise as the Father.

In the Gloria in Excelsis, we praise God, we bless Him, we worship Him, we glorify Him, and we give thanks to Him. We equally praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We differentiate between the persons of God the Father Almighty, the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit. As we make a distinction between the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, we emphasize the holy incarnation which distinguishes the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Neither the Father nor the Spirit took upon flesh, suffered, died, and was raised bodily. Jesus alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and in His human nature sits at the right hand of the Father. He receives our prayers and answers them. He alone is holy. Yet, with the Holy Spirit, He is most high in the glory of God the Father. As we say in the Nicene Creed, “the Holy Spirit... with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Trinitarian Prayer and the Full Termination**

After praising the work of the Holy Trinity for bringing about our salvation, we pray. In the catholic liturgy, we are taught that we come to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. St. Paul teaches us, “For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:18, ESV) Thus, the prayers of the catholic liturgy teach and confess the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we see the richness of petitions prayed in the name of Jesus. This treasure is far more than just a wooden literal “in the name of Jesus” tagged on the end of a prayer as if we were clicking the send button to deliver an email.

St. Paul expounds upon prayer to the Triune God. He teaches us, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26–27, ESV) And further he states, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”” (Galatians 4:4–6, ESV) Additionally, he teaches us in the Epistle to the Romans saying, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” (Romans 8:14–16, ESV) And he goes on to say,

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<sup>17</sup> Divine Service Setting One and Setting Two in the *Lutheran Service Book* provide the option of singing “This is the Feast” instead of the Gloria in Excelsis. This new canticle is based upon the praise given to the Lamb found in Revelation 5:12-13 and 19:5-9. It teaches that the Lamb is given equal honor, blessing, and glory with God the Father. Likewise, in the Te Deum from the order of Matins we praise God with the thrice holy from the vision of Isaiah teaching the plurality of persons of the Blessed Trinity. Further, we praise God saying, “The Father of an infinite majesty; Your adorable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.” As in the Gloria Excelsis, we stress the person and work of Christ in the incarnation. He was born of a Virgin, redeemed us with His precious blood, and overcame the sharpness of death to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26–27, ESV)

Usually, we pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. This can be seen in the praying of the “Our Father.” Additionally, the collect of the day, the prayer of the church, and the concluding collect after receiving holy communion end with the full termination, “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.” Again, all three persons of the Holy Trinity are given equal honor, glory, and praise. We teach that they are consubstantial by confessing that they are one God. All three are confessed to be coeternal. To further teach that all three persons of the Blessed Trinity are co-equal, at times we pray to the person of the Son and conclude by saying, “You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

### **The Service of the Sacrament of the Altar**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews writes, “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:13–14, ESV) In the partaking of the Lord’s Table we confess the work of the Holy Trinity in our salvation. Jesus was offered up to God the Father through the eternal Spirit on the cross. In Holy Communion we partake of the benefits of that sacrifice receiving the very body and very blood of Christ for our forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is important to note that the Sacrament of the Altar is not found regularly in sectarian worship. Yet, the goal of the sectarian worship service is to experience the presence of the invisible God. In order to be bodily present among us working in our midst, Christ our Lord has instituted His Holy Supper. The Father tells us to listen to Him. The Spirit testifies to us in the words of institution.

In the Solid Declaration we teach,

Christ can be and is present wherever he wills, and in particular that he is present with his church and community on earth as mediator, head, king, and high priest. Not part or only one-half of the person of Christ, but the entire person to which both natures, the divine and the human, belong is present. He is present not only according to his deity, but also according to and with his assumed human nature, according to which he is our brother and we flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone (Eph. 5:30). To make certainty and assurance doubly sure on this point, he instituted his Holy Supper that he might be present with us, dwell in us, work and be mighty in us according to that nature, too, according to which he has flesh and blood.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Tappert, pp. 606–607.

For our salvation, Jesus was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary taking upon flesh and blood in order to suffer and die in our place. He has risen and ascended bodily to be our High Priest. As our only mediator with God, He is present in the breaking of the bread. The Holy Incarnation teaches us that only the second person of the Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary in order to suffer and die in our place. He alone was given the name Jesus. Only the second person of the Blessed Trinity was anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River and declared to be the Christ that is the Anointed One. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit was incarnate. Thus, when we refer to the second person of the Holy Trinity as Jesus Christ we are making a distinction between the three persons of the Trinity. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who instituted His Supper so that we can receive His life giving body and His life giving blood.

In the catholic liturgy, we teach that the Son of God is the One who reveals God to us. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” (John 1:18, ESV) And again Jesus says, “No one comes to the Father except through me.” And “[w]hoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:6, 9, ESV) In the Sacrament of the Altar, we have the means through which Jesus desires to be physically present in our midst. We receive His very body and blood that was given up for us on the cross to grant us access to the Father. He has opened heaven to all who believe in Him.

Thus, we use the Spirit-filled words that testify to His visible presence in our midst. In the Sanctus, we combine the words of *Isaiah* chapter six in which the prophet saw the Son on the throne bodily and the Seraphim cried out the thrice holy one to another in the heavenly Temple with the words of the Triumphal entry in which Jesus comes bodily to the earthly Temple. In addition, we confess the words of John the Baptizer who saw the dove visibly descend upon Jesus in the Jordan River. He announced to those confessing their sins at the river that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We speak the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who was anointed by the Father with the Spirit. Then after speaking the inspired words of Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed we sing the Nunc Dimittis in which Simeon, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared that he had seen the Lord’s salvation.

In fact, any passage in which the person of the Father and the person of the Son is being distinguished, all three persons are present since the Holy Spirit is the One who is bearing witness in the word. It is the work of the Spirit to glorify Christ. “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:14, ESV) David says, “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.” (2 Samuel 23:2, ESV) The Apostle Peter teaches us, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21, ESV) And again he instructs us “[c]oncerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” (1 Peter 1:10–11, ESV) Furthermore, we pray the words of Psalm 51 asking the LORD to create in us and clean heart, that we would not be cast out of His presence, and that He would not take His Spirit from us. Throughout the catholic liturgy we hear the Spirit speaking to us in the Spirit-filled word.

As we gather together called by the name of the Triune God, we conclude the service with the words from the Spirit of Truth given to Aaron at the tabernacle. In the days of the Old Testament, the people of God would gather at the tabernacle to be in God's presence. In *Numbers* chapter six we are taught that,

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them." (Numbers 6:22–27, ESV)

Therefore, at the conclusion of the Divine Service we place the name of Triune God upon those gathered. Once again we are taught to make a distinction in the plurality of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The name Yahweh is spoke thrice.<sup>19</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As those who confess the catholic faith in which "we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance" it is good practice to use only the catholic liturgy and not sectarian worship. We desire all people to be saved and thus we desire to teach them what they need to know about the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through the vehicle of the catholic liturgy we clearly teach and confess the article of Justification through faith alone, the holy incarnation, and the Blessed Holy Trinity.

[www.redeemerlosalamos.org/pages/Trinity.html](http://www.redeemerlosalamos.org/pages/Trinity.html)

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<sup>19</sup> In Matins, the benediction that is spoken is given to us by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. The Pastor declares, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14) In the Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline Service the pastor teaches the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity by saying, "The Almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you. Amen." Here we are taught that the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord; and yet there are not three Almighty and merciful Lords, but one Lord.