

## The Divine Service: Preface & Proper Preface

c. 220–

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And with thy spirit.

**P** Lift up your hearts.

*[Colossians 3:1]*

**C** We lift them up unto the Lord.

**P** Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God.

*[Psalm 136]*

**C** It is meet and right so to do.

**P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary . . . evermore praising You and saying:

The Responsory of the Preface and Proper Preface, leading up to the singing of the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy...”) is one of the most ancient and unchanging parts of the Divine Service. Nearly throughout the Church’s life, these words between pastor and people have prefaced the Lord’s Supper.

The Preface begins with the Salutation, which we have seen already before the Collect of the Day and will see again before the Benedicamus and Benediction. The Salutation, “The Lord be with you” is the pastor’s announcement to the people that the Lord is present with his minister, according to his definite promise—in this case, to deliver his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. The people respond, “And with thy spirit (or Spirit),” acknowledging that the pastor serves “in the stead and by the command of his Lord Jesus,” that he is called and ordained to be the Lord’s instrument, the servant specifically sent to deliver Word and Sacrament.

The pastor and people then say, “Lift up your hearts,” and “We lift them up unto the Lord.” With these words we prepare joyfully to receive him who comes to us in his body and blood, subjecting all the cares of our hearts, for joy, to the one who comes to heal us so “that among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found” (Collect for Cantate, the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter). Namely, in Jesus and his Supper!

Finally, the pastor says, “Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God,” and the people respond, “It is meet and right so to do,” or in a more literal take on the original Greek, “He is worthy!” Such is our confidence in what he comes to do, that we thank him before the meal! So the great song of heaven’s thanksgiving, the worship of the Lamb once slain and now alive (Rev 5:6–14) reverberates among us on earth, and we, “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven” praise the name of Jesus, who has redeemed us by his blood. A seasonal “proper preface,” full of thanksgiving and praise, follows, echoing our Lord’s practice of giving thanks. (The Greek word for this thanksgiving, *Eucharist*, sometimes lends its name to the whole Supper.)

With these ancient words we are led faithfully, hopefully, joyfully (Col 3:1–17), to the Supper of our Lord, with which he has fed and sustained his Church from the beginning, and to which he gathers us together to be, as Luther says, “one bread, gathered from many grains” into the body of Christ.