

Fides Quae

A Festal Letter for Pastors of the Kansas District

HISTORICAL

*Descendit ad Inferos: An Historic Look at
the Descent into Hell*

Fr. Ian Kinney



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FROM THE PRESS

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity” ~ Psalm 133

Unity of doctrine and practice is an important element of Scripture. To this end, Saint John the Baptist Press has initiated a project to promote such unity for which our Lord prays (John 17). Welcome to *Fides Quae*—the quarterly Festal Letter for the pastors of the Kansas District. Our goal is to provide practical, liturgical, homiletical, and historical resources to all the pastors of the Kansas district. The letter will circulate in Holy Week, the Martyrdom of Peter & Paul, Holy Cross Day, and the Nativity of our Lord.

If God so wills it, the practical, liturgical, homiletical, and historical disciplines will encourage you in your ministry, provide you with resources for preaching and teaching, and remind you that you are not alone as you bring the ministry of Christ to His people. If you are reading this, you are the heir of the doctrine of the blessed apostles. You are the faithful man to whom the Faith has been entrusted so that you can teach it to others (2 Tim 2). This means that you are the man of whom St Paul speaks: the man who must share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. You are reminded by the apostle that while you soldier on, your fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the demonic rulers and devilish powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm in this fight.

Your fight is for *Fides Quae*, after which this effort is named. *Fides Quae* means “the faith which is believed.” The Faith which is believed does not refer to personal saving faith—*fides qua*—but that One Holy Christian and Apostolic Faith to which our saving faith clings. *Fides Quae* is THE Faith. The Faith once purchased for all the saints. The Faith taught by Christ, handed down by the apostles, entrusted to faithful men, and now taught and delivered by you. The doctrine of *Fides Quae* is The Faith you teach and The Faith for which and by which you fight. This publication of *Fides Quae* is an effort of Saint John the Baptist Press to encourage you in the fight and fire your heart when the warfare is long.

Beyond the *Fides Quae*, Saint John the Baptist Press is also in the process of working on several small books to aid pastors in their ministry, covering topics like conducting marriages, presiding at funerals, communion practice, and Hispanic ministry aids. If God so wills it, these resources will be published and made available for purchase in the coming year. The peace of God be with you as you strive to give Him glory.

Sincerely,

The Editors at St. John the Baptist Press



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DESCENDIT AD INFEROS: An Historic Look at the Descent into Hell

“As Satan the prince, and Hell, spoke this together, suddenly there came a voice as of thunder and a spiritual cry: Remove, O princes, your gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. . . . Then said Hell unto his wicked ministers: Shut ye the hard gates of brass and put on them the bars of iron and withstand stoutly, lest we that hold captivity be taken captive. . . . When Hell and death and their wicked ministers saw that, they were stricken with fear, they and their cruel officers, at the sight of the brightness of so great light in their own realm, seeing Christ of a sudden in their abode, and they cried out, saying: We are overcome by thee.”¹

A notable and widely attested fourth century Christian text beautifully highlights the historic view of the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of the descent into hell quoted above. This historic and biblical understanding of the descent is still taught in historic and present Lutheran theology. Luther lays the foundation of this understanding in his Third Sermon on Easter Sunday in 1533 at Torgau,² which the reformers later expound in the Formula of Concord Article IX where they confess “That the entire person, God and human being, descended to hell after his burial, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of hell, and took from the devil all his power.”³ The Formulators set up, so to speak, four walls around the historic theology of the descent in the same way the Chalcedonian Definition sets up its four walls around historic Christology. Namely, that the descent happened after the burial of Jesus, in His whole person, not as a matter of suffering, but rather as a matter of victory. This is the historic position of the Church. Within these “walls” Christians confess the historic position on the descent which shall be discussed below.

¹ Gospel of Nicodemus, V-VI.

² Hereafter “The Torgau Sermon.”

³ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, IX:3. All translations taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

⁴ David Scaer, *Christology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, Volume 6

The *descendit*, Dr. David Scaer points out, is the only article of the Apostles’ Creed “to be specifically addressed by an article in the Lutheran Confessions.”⁴

This doctrine is included in the Formula because it is a historic doctrine of the Church, and as such is both biblical and creedal. There are, however, many dogmas that fit those criteria that are not in the Formula. The catalysts that make the *descendit*’s inclusion particularly important to the reformers are the ancient and reformation-era controversies surrounding the matter. Additionally, Luther points out its implications for Christology.

Scaer says that the matter of historic consensus on descent into hell is a complex one because “there was little consensus among the early church fathers or contemporary commentators on its meaning.”⁵ Furthermore, David Truemper notes that “it is clear that the idea of the *descendit* is a very early part of Christian thinking.”⁶

While there was consensus on the fact that the descent happened, the mode, timing, and purpose were often debated. Many sources besides the previously mentioned Gospel of Nicodemus—which was in fact a foundational text for this doctrine⁷—addressed the *descendit* at length, including some notable fathers: Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, as well as “Tertullian, Hippolyte, Lactantius, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine . . . Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem.”⁸ Even the infamous Conrad Coyer⁹ mentions Saint Irenaeus who spoke of Christ’s descent in terms similar to Saint Peter’s: that Christ went “to the regions under the earth, preaching to them also his advent.”¹⁰ Coyer also goes on to mention the

(Fort Wayne, IN: International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989), 83.

⁵ Scaer, *Christology*, 83.

⁶ David George Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, Masters Thesis (Concordia Theological Seminary 1939), 8.

works of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, the Epistle of Barnabas, Jerome, and Cyril of Alexandria in their treatment of the *descendit*.¹¹ Out of the many early fathers who address this issue, Augustine of Hippo, Ephrem the Syrian, and Cyril of Alexandria are of particular interest.

Augustine has influenced much of Western thought, but he makes an especially important contribution, especially for the authors of the Formula of Concord, in the discussion of Christ's descent. While Augustine does indicate confusion over interpreting the passage in 1 Peter 3 by itself, Augustine strongly affirms the *descendit* on the basis of Psalm 16 and Acts 2. "Who, therefore," says Augustine, "except an infidel, would deny that Christ was in Hades?"¹² Augustine further influences the Formula: "No reason can be alleged for believing that he who is the saviour went thither, except that He might save from its pang."¹³ Thus, Augustine teaches the descent to be a matter of redemption. The most prolific historic writer from the early church on the *descendit* was Ephrem the Syrian.¹⁴ He unwaveringly confesses that this descent of Christ was a part of Christ's redemptive work, that He descended into hell, as the $\theta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$, and that His descent was a matter of conquering, not suffering.¹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria teaches

the *descendit* as "Christ's victory over death and his resurrection from the dead."¹⁶ Furthermore, considering how often Cyril mentions the descent and how rarely Cyril explains it implies that for him "it was not a controversial topic that he thought required extensive development or defense."¹⁷ Many of these earliest and most important fathers were "united in their acceptance of Christ's descent into hell. But there was much disagreement as to the mode

in which He descended and His purpose in descending."¹⁸ For example, by the time of the Middle Ages, the theology of the *descendit* is fairly consistent with only minor variations. From Augustine to the Reformation there is "little deviation from the normative view, given expression by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*."¹⁹

All this goes to show that while the fathers agreed that the descent happened, the mode, manner, timing, and reason have at times been debated. The Formula of Concord is not ignorant of this. It confesses that "even in the ancient Christian teachers of the Church, as well as in some among our teachers, dissimilar explanations of the article concerning the descent of Christ to hell are found" (FC SD

IX 1). However, the loudest and clearest voices of the patristic era—especially Augustine, Ephrem, and Cyril—confess the same thing as Luther and the Formula.



⁷ Modern Lutherans may regard the Gospel of Nicodemus with some skepticism. However, while not canonical, it was held in the highest regard by renowned and historic theological scholars, even into the Middle Ages. See Truemper, *The Descensus*, 13, 14, 17, 20, 78.

⁸ Theodore Graebner, "Christ's Descent into hell and the Possibility of Conversion after Death," *Theological Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1908): 27. See also Gaylin Schmeling, "The Descent into Hell," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1985): 11.

⁹ It should be noted that Coyer's work resulted in charges of false doctrine. He subsequently published retractions.

¹⁰ Conrad Coyer, *The History and Scriptural Basis of the Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell (Descensus ad Inferos) Critically Examined*, Thesis presented to the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, 1943, 4.

¹¹ Coyer, *History and Scriptural Basis*, 3–9.

¹² As quoted in Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, 18.

¹³ As quoted in Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, 18.

¹⁴ Thomas Buchan, *Blessed is He Who Has Brought Adam From Sheol: Christ's Descent into the Dead in the Theology of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 22.

¹⁵ Buchan, *Blessed is He Who Has Brought Adam From Sheol: Christ's Descent into the Dead in the Theology of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, 122–127, 146–147.

¹⁶ As quoted by Daniel Keating, "Christ's Despoiling of Hades: According to Cyril of Alexandria," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 255.

¹⁷ As quoted by Daniel Keating, "Christ's Despoiling of Hades: According to Cyril of Alexandria," 256.

¹⁸ Gaylin Schmeling, "The Descent into Hell," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1985): 273.

¹⁹ Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, 7.

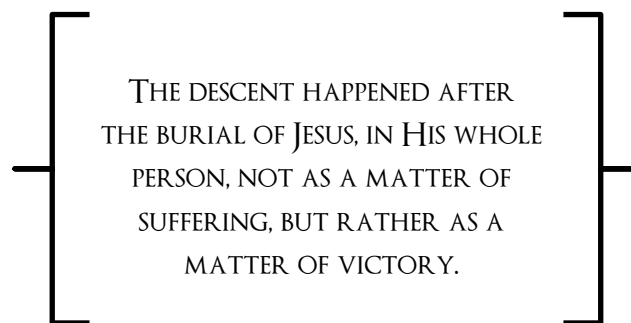
Furthermore, in his Torgau Sermon, Luther even understands the fathers to be in agreement with his and the subsequent Formulators' position.²⁰

The Lutheran position codified in the Formula of Concord, however, is not without controversy, particularly during the interim between Luther's death and the penning of the Formula. One such controversy took place in Pomerania in 1554, another in Augsburg in 1565. The Pomeranian controversy surrounded a misunderstanding that the descent was the same as the burial, that it was a matter of Christ's suffering, and that it was only the soul of Christ. Following this issue, a local synod was held on July 11, 1554 which condemned these views. Following which, the pastor in contempt recanted his position.²¹

The Augsburg controversy surrounded John Matsperger, a deacon at Sainte Anne's in Augsburg, and a pastor named Parsimonius. Matsperger taught the position that would later be adopted and confessed by the Formula, while Parsimonius claimed that Matsperger misunderstood Luther. Furthermore, Parsimonius erroneously stated that the theology of hell as a particular place is "contrary to the analogy of faith."²² In summary, from the 1530s through the 1560s, "disagreement and debate over the proper way to understand this doctrine plagued the Lutheran ministerial" and aided the Lutherans in articulating their confession in this matter.²³

Luther and the Formulators make it very clear that, on account of the hypostatic union, the union of the person of Christ is at all times preserved. Christ's person is always united, even and especially in the descent. If it were just the soul of Christ that descended into hell, or if it were just His divinity or humanity, then Christology would become

muddled and confused. It is the whole person of Christ, in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation who descends into hell after His burial, in His whole person, not as a matter of suffering, but rather as a matter of victory. With the historic church, the Formula, and with Dr. Luther, let us confess that "the entire person, God and man, after the burial descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of hell, and took from the devil all his might" (FC SD IX 2). With the saints of the fourth century, let us conclude that upon the descent "Then did the King of glory in his majesty trample upon death, and laid hold on Satan the prince and delivered him unto the power of Hell, and drew Adam to him unto his own brightness."²⁴ †



THE DESCENT HAPPENED AFTER
THE BURIAL OF JESUS, IN HIS WHOLE
PERSON, NOT AS A MATTER OF
SUFFERING, BUT RATHER AS A
MATTER OF VICTORY.

²⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: American Edition* 57, (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 129–130. Luther, Melancthon, and Bugenhagen disagreed in their understanding of the descent. There was indeed a time when even Melancthon understood the descent as Christ suffering the torment of hell (Truemper, 203). Melancthon later retracted these sentiments (Truemper 208).

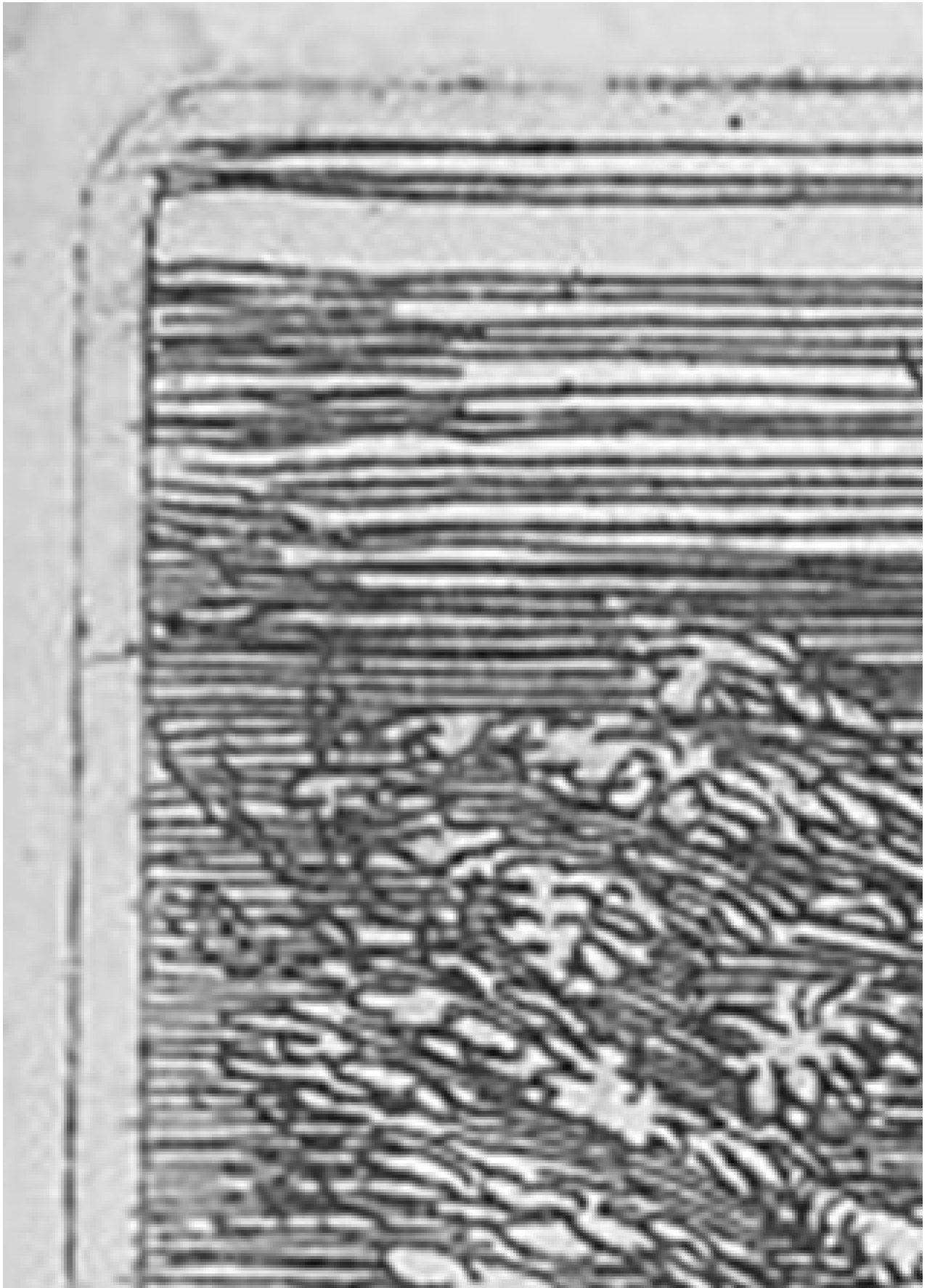
²¹ Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, 272–275.

²² Truemper, *The Descensus ad Inferos, from Luther to the Formula of Concord*, 282.

²³ Robert Kolb, ed. and James A. Nestingen, ed., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 245.

²⁴ Gospel of Nicodemus, VI 2.

Artwork: *Christ in Limbo*, Albrecht Dürer, 1511.



Agony in the Garden, Albrecht Dürer, 1515.

ON PRAYING THE PSALMS

If you have not read St. Athanasius' work on the interpretation of the Psalms, you are the poorer for it. Athanasius is a true father in the faith, guiding the children of God in how to read, pray, and live in the Psalter. In comparison, this paltry article is meant only to encourage you to take up his better work and so finally take up the Psalms as your daily prayer book and guide in the holy faith.

This is why you should pray the Psalms: to be guided in the holy faith. As Athanasius points out, every other book of the Old Testament is written with another man's words and circumstance and situation. While many of the psalms give a superscript that gives the occasion of the psalm, all of them are composed so that they are timeless prayers to be taken up in the voice and circumstance in which each saint and child of God may find him or herself.

Yet even if a psalm does not seem to "fit" the current time or circumstance, it is still fitting to be prayed. It is fitting because the Psalter is the prayerbook of the Church of God, and while this or that psalm may not seem to fit your circumstance or your life, it fits the circumstance and life of the people of God and so is prayed by the people of God. This prayer—the prayers of a righteous man—avails much.

"But," someone might ask, "is it better to pray the psalms," as in, "Are the psalms better prayers to be prayed than our own?" Without being too pointed, I wonder if this question is not born of laziness rather than an actual desire to pray the best prayers. After all, what is better, our words or God's words? It is better to be formed by the Word of God in prayer—praying the prayers the Holy Spirit has given to the people of God, who together are the Temple of God—or is it better to come with a blank slate and try to pattern our words and prayers without being informed formed by the Word of God? One might object, "When we pray the Psalms our minds wander, whereas when we form prayers of our own we must think of what to say and how to say it." This thinking, however, shows us that we would rather struggle with our own words than learn how to hear and pray God's Word. No disciple forms himself

but is formed by the master, and no soldier trains his own hands for war but is trained by his commander (Ps 144:1; 18:34).

Including the Psalms in your daily prayers—or even letting the psalms be your daily prayers—is as salutary as reading a chapter or two from the Bible, as these prayers of God guide us in our faith, establish us in the truth, and express the joys, needs, fears, laments, and praise of God's holy people. It's not easy. It takes quite a bit of discipline, particularly if you pray the Psalms throughout the day. But then, the Lord has not promised us an easy time of prayer. In fact, prayer is the battlefield of the faith, as is most evident in the Gospels when the Lord often retreats and prays. It is when He is alone that Satan attacks, both in the wilderness and in the Garden. Satan attacks when we pray, and our prayers are the exercise of faith by which we extinguish the fiery darts of the devil. Such an important, vital part of the Christian life should be well guarded by sinking deep into the Word of God: the Psalms.

How should the Psalms be prayed? There are several available charts to help us pray the Psalms. The Concordia Psalter (CPH) has a chart that prays the Psalms over a two-week period. There is a one-month chart in the Treasury of Daily Prayer. There is yet another chart that is based on the Church Year in the LSB (although this does not include every psalm, as the LSB does not include every psalm). Perhaps, though, it is best to simply pray five psalms a day. This will take you through the Psalter in one month. If you want to pray in both the evening and the morning you could repeat the five (which would help commit them to memory and the pattern of speech) or you could pray ten (five in the evening and five in the morning) and pray the Psalter over two weeks. However you break it up, however you approach it, you can do no harm and no evil will befall you if you take up the Word of God and place it on your lips, in your heart, and on your mind. I pray that you find voice in the prayers that God has given us and that this voice is raised on High where the Most High hears and answers in Christ Jesus, our Lord. ✠

PRAYING THE DAILY OFFICES:

WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF
THE WORD ~ ACTS 6:4

No doubt in your many years as a Christian you have heard pastors—and you pastors have said yourselves—that we need to be in daily prayer. As pastors we not only pray daily, but also are called to lead the congregation in prayer. Our public liturgies—the “Hours” or “Daily Offices”—are a wonderful, godly way to do this. If we are not praying the daily offices in our congregations—that is, publicly setting aside a time when the Church is at prayer—we should seriously consider it. Not everyone can come to a daily office because of work-a-day schedules, but we pastors are called to pray, as the Apostles say: “We will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Too often, Monday morning at our churches looks no different than Monday morning at any office building. But we are the Church, our ways are not the ways of the world. As congregations, we are not simply “franchises” but are the Body of Christ called to gather in prayer and celebration of our Lord’s life and mercy.

One of the beautiful things about singing Matins every day is the Venite, Psalm 95. It is a call to praise God with its opening verse, “O come let us sing to the Lord / Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation / Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving / Let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.” Truly this is the “morning sacrifice” (Ps 5:3) and the prayer that comes before Him in the morning (Ps 88:13). It’s unfortunate that the last part of Psalm 95 has been removed from Matins (at my parish we have added it back in). The last two verses read:

“Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as at Meribah /

As on the day of Massah, in the wilderness

When your fathers put Me to the test and put Me to the proof though they had seen My work.

For forty years I loathed that generation and said,
“They are people who go astray in their hearts,

And they have not known My ways.

Therefore I said in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”

It’s unfortunate that these have been removed because it is a daily reminder to heed the voice of the Lord. Including these verses in the Venite makes today the day we expect to hear from the Lord God, and the day in which we will heed His voice. Today is the day we avoid bitterness and trust in the Lord.

How beautiful it is, then, when we close the day with Compline, having heard the voice of the Lord, singing the Nunc Dimittis. Of course we have heard the voice of the Lord because unlike days of old when He spoke to us by the prophets, He now speaks to us through His Son. While the prophets came and went, and had long periods of silence, the voice of the Good Shepherd is never silent in the ears of the sheep of His pasture. We hear Him when we read the Bible and when we pray the prayers of the Church, but also when He calls to mind His marvelous works. When we think on the Cross and His glorious resurrection, when we think on His forgiveness and love, we are hearing Him. The Spirit calls to mind the things that belong to Jesus. This is done in Matins in the Te Deum, that great creedal song of the Church wherein we offer praise and thanksgiving to our God who has done such marvelous things for us.

So if you are not offering a time during the week—a daily time would be best—when the congregation knows it can gather in prayer, I would encourage you to do so. It’s not easy. It can become a chore. But what a chore it is! You can offer a sermon or meditation (the Treasury of Daily Prayer almost makes daily Matins and Vespers too easy). It can be done without accompaniment and can be done in less than twenty-five minutes. But the real reason to do it is that, as the apostles said above, “We will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.” Our people need prayer. They need daily, public prayer. Thank the Lord that He has established the ministry to which prayer is part and parcel and has filled it with men who love to gather in His house of prayer. ✠

THE KOIMETERION: A Homily on the Name “Cemetery”

Until his elevation to bishop in 398, Saint John Chrysostom served as a pastor in Antioch beginning in 386. Because of his comment about keeping the memory of the cross (σταυροῦ μνηρίαν ἐπιτελοῦμεν; I.8–9) as well as various historical circumstances, historians infer that he preached this sermon on Good Friday in 391.¹ He preached this sermon in the cemetery of Antioch after which the faithful processed to the church for the Good Friday Procession. This is the basis for the sermon I preach at every burial and it will be the basis for my Easter homily. May this excerpt from the Golden Mouth bless your preaching as it has mine.

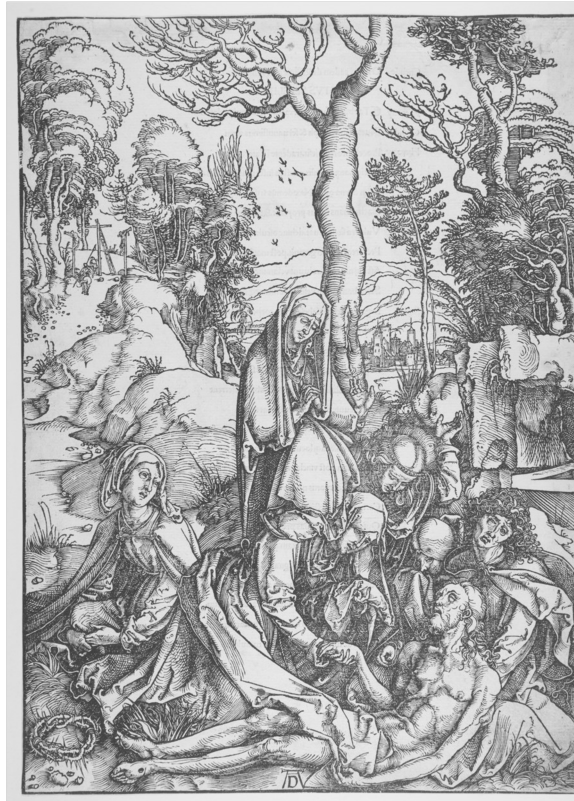
In Christ, Pastor Ian Kinney

ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΤΟΥ
ΚΟΙΜΗΤΗΡΙΟΥ

Homily on the Name
“Cemetery”

Often I have asked myself for what reason our fathers legislated that, on this day, we should abandon the houses of prayer in the cities and assemble outside our city, in this place. For surely, the fathers did not do this rashly or randomly. I searched for the cause, and I found, by the grace of God, one that is right, plausible, and fitting for the present feast. What, then, is the cause? We are keeping the memory of the

Cross; for The Crucified One (ὁ δὲ σταυρωθεὶς) was crucified outside the city, hence the fathers led us outside our city. For the sheep, it is said, follow the shepherd; where the king is, there also are the soldiers; and where the Body is, there also the eagles gather (Matt 24:28). But, although this is one reason we are outside the city, we shall offer a still better explanation from the divine Scriptures. In order that you do not think this is merely our conjecture, I adduce Paul as a witness. What, then, does he say about the sacrifices? “For the bodies of the animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest on account of sin are burned outside the encampment” (Heb 13:11). And so Jesus, in order that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate.



Accordingly, let us go toward him outside the encampment, bearing his shame. It is said: Paul commanded, we listened and went forth. For this reason, therefore, we are assembled outside the walls. But why do we assemble in this place of martyrs (ἐν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ τούτῳ), and not in another? For, by the grace of God, our city is fortified by the relics (λείψανοις: remnants/pieces) of the saints on every side. Why, therefore, did the fathers urge us to assemble here, and not in another of this place of martyrs? Because a multitude of the dead lie here. Since

¹ Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom: Provenance: Reshaping the Foundations*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 273 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005), 141.

Artwork: *The Lamentation*, Albrecht Dürer, 1498.

today Jesus descended among the dead, for this reason we are gathering here. For the same reason, moreover, this place is called a cemetery (κοιμητήριον), in order that you may learn that those who have reached their end and who lie here are not dead, but rather are sleeping and resting. For, before the coming of Christ, death was called “death.” The Scriptures say, “On whatever day you eat from the tree, you will die in death” (Gen 2:17). . . . Yet death was not only called “death,” but also “Hades.” Hear the saying of David: “Yet God will ransom my soul from the grasp of Hades, when he receives me” (Ps 48:16). And that of Jacob: “You will plunge my old age into Hades with grief” (Gen 42:38). These had been the names for our end previously, but since Christ came and died for the life of the world, death is therefore no longer called “death,” but rather “drowsiness” and “sleep.” That it may be called “sleep” is evident from the saying of Christ: “Lazarus, our friend, is sleeping” (John 11:11). For he did not say, “He died,” yet in fact he was dead. See how, in every case, death is called sleep.

Hence the place is called a cemetery (κοιμητήριον), for the name is both useful for us and full of much wisdom. When, therefore, you bring a deceased person here, do not tear yourself to pieces, for you lead him not unto death, but unto sleep. . . .

But you have a suitable remedy for those who are despondent, the name of the place: cemetery. These are the reasons we gather here. Today our Lord traverses all of Hades. . . . The tyrant was led into captivity, the powerful one into bondage; having cast down its weapons, death, itself, rushed defenseless to the feet of the king. Do you see the marvelous victory?

Do you see the feat accomplished on the cross? And shall I tell you something even more marvelous? Learn the manner of the victory, and then you will be more astounded. For through the same means by which the

devil conquered, Christ in turn prevailed, and, having taken the devil’s own weapons, he subdued them. And have you heard how? A virgin and wood and death were the symbols of our defeat. The virgin was Eve, for she had not yet known man. The wood was the tree, and death was the punishment of Adam. But behold, once again, a virgin and wood and death: these were the symbols of defeat, and they became the symbols of victory. For in place of Eve is Mary, in place of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is the wood of the cross, and in place of the death of Adam is the death of Christ. Do you see that the devil is defeated through the same means by which he had conquered? By the tree, the devil subverted Adam, while by the cross, Christ vanquished the devil. . . . Out of death, we have been made immortals. . . . So what are you doing, O man?

WE ARE KEEPING THE MEMORY OF
THE CROSS; FOR THE CRUCIFIED ONE
WAS CRUCIFIED OUTSIDE THE CITY,
HENCE THE FATHERS LED US OUTSIDE
OUR CITY. FOR THE SHEEP, IT IS SAID,
FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD; WHERE THE
KING IS, THERE ALSO ARE THE
SOLDIERS; AND WHERE THE BODY IS,

When the priest stands before the table, lifting up his hands to heaven and invoking the Holy Spirit to come down and touch the offerings, there is much peace, much silence. When the Spirit gives the grace, when he descends, when he touches the offerings, when you shall see the sheep slaughtered and offered: do you then bring forth uproar, disorder, contention, insults? And how will you be able to enjoy this sacrifice, approaching this table with such

great disorder? Is it not enough for us that we should approach with sins, but should we not also endure this time of approach without committing further faults? Because, therefore, we enjoyed so great a gift, let us show ourselves, so far as we have the power, worthy of the good things that have been granted to us, in order that we might gain the kingdom of the heavens, by the grace and benevolence of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom glory, honor, and state belong to the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, into the ages of ages. Amen.

✠ Saint John Chrysostom, Good Friday, A.D. 391 ✠



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Mortgages
Home Equity Loans
Savings
Checking**

A dark grey circular graphic with a white border containing a list of services offered by the credit union.

Contact Us At:

LutheranFCU.org

(314) 394-2790

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