



# Liturgical Thought

## EXPLANATION AND GUIDE TO THE LUTHERAN LITURGY<sup>1</sup>

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### Why does the Prayer of the Church come between the Sermon and the Service of the Sacrament of the Altar?

Also called the “**General Prayer**,” the **Prayer of the Church** is a **gathering of the petitions of God’s people into one common prayer and supplication as one common response** to all that has come before in the **Divine Service**, even as the congregation prepares to receive the benefits of our Lord’s **Body and Blood** in the **Holy Eucharist** as one Body in Christ. Here **we gather our prayers together, imploring God and trusting in faith that He will respond in His abundant grace and mercy according to His will.**

**Lutheran worship is our God speaking and our listening and response.** God gives us His Word and in joyful response we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. As the introduction to Lutheran Worship (the old blue hymnal) stated:

*“Our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. **Faith that is born from what is heard acknowledges the gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise....** Saying back to Him what He has said to us, we repeat what is most true and sure.”<sup>2</sup>*

One of my professors under whom I studied in preparation for the Office of the Holy Ministry once wrote:

*“**God’s Word is always primary in worship. We speak only as we are spoken to. Gathered in Jesus’ Name, we bring the petitions and thanksgivings before Him that grow out of His Word. This prayer is called the Prayer of the Church for in it the Royal Priesthood of All Believers does its priestly work of making ‘supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all men, for kings and for all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.’**”* (1 Timothy 2:1, ESV)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this series on the Liturgy of the Church is found in *Why? A Layman’s Guide to the Liturgy*, by Rev. Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., Repristination Press, (Malone, TX.), and first published in *Gottesdienst, The Journal of Lutheran Liturgy*, in a series by the same name between the years 1985-2005. Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship*, St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Pless, John, T., “*A Narrative Commentary on the Divine Service.*”

Therefore, as God's people we gather together to speak and confess with one voice our **desires, hopes, hurts, our joy and faith**; we come together to ask of God those things that are **pleasing to Him** and **good for us** in recognition that **it is the Lord who orders our days and our deeds as He has from the time of creation.**

**✠ ✠ ✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠ ✠ ✠**