



Liturgical Thought

EXPLANATION AND GUIDE TO THE LUTHERAN LITURGY¹

Why are the Host and Chalice elevated at the Lord's Supper?

“We do not want to abolish the elevation, but retain it because it goes well with the German Sanctus and signifies that Christ has commanded us to remember Him.” (Dr. Martin Luther)²

We have now come to the highpoint of the Divine Service, privileged to climb to the heights of our faith with the angels, archangels, and all the company of Heaven. This is the point for which we are here; to receive the blessed Body and Blood of our sacrificed Lord for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith that we may receive also life and salvation.

We Lutherans confess the true and real presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper for us poor sinners to eat and to drink as instituted by Christ Himself. We approach this great gift with the utmost reverence for if Christ is truly present in these simple elements (**and He is, even as He has said, “*This is My Body... This is My Blood.*”**) then we are truly in the presence of the Almighty God!

The text of the German Sanctus is translated into English in the text of the hymn *“Isaiah, Mighty Seer In Days of Old”* (TLH 249; LSB 960) and clearly shows that our Sanctus sung in every Divine Service is drawn from Isaiah 6:1-4. Our singing of the Sanctus is our confession that we believe we are no longer in an ordinary realm but in the very presence of God as He brings Heaven down to earth in His blessed Sacrament. For where Christ Jesus is, there also do we find Heaven. It is as though we are entering into the very throne room of God.

As we enter into God's presence we dare not approach Him irreverently, but with fear and awe. Even as the angels covered their faces and their feet in God's presence (Isaiah 6:2) and Moses removed his shoes as he walked on holy ground (Exodus 3:5; Acts 7:33), so we find ourselves kneeling to commune, bowing, and making the sign of the cross as we approach Christ in His Holy Meal.

¹ Much 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.

² Luther, Martin, *Luther's Works, vol. 53, Liturgy and Hymns*, Leupold, Ulrich S. ed., Lehmann, Helmut T., gen. ed., Fortress Press, (Philadelphia), 1965, p. 82.

Though done in Christian freedom, these practices have long been observed by the Apostolic Christian Church, to remind ourselves that this is no ordinary meal but the Medicine of Immortality given and poured out for the life of the world as the suffering Christ died on the Cross of Calvary. Therefore we elevate the elements as a bold, unspoken, confession of faith. For the bread which we brake and the cup from which we drink hold no ordinary elements but are the very Body and Blood of Jesus, the very Son of God who is Himself God.

Holy, Holy, Holy,

Lord God of Sabaoth;

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory!

Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the Highest!

Blessed is He! Blessed is He! Blessed is He who cometh in the Name of the Lord!

Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the Highest!

✠ ✠ ✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠ ✠ ✠