

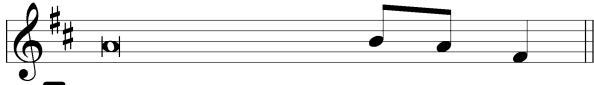
Service of Matins

August 30, 2020 -- the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

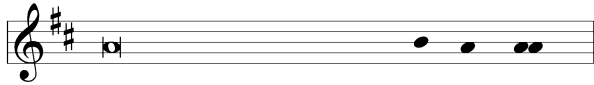
Opening Verses



L O Lord, o - pen my lips,



C and my mouth will de - clare Your praise.



L Make haste, O God, to de - liv - er me;



C make haste to help me, O Lord.



C Glo - ry be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and will be for - ev - er. A - men.



Common: Praise to You, O Christ. Al - le - lu - ia.

Advent: Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Lent: Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our sal - va - tion.

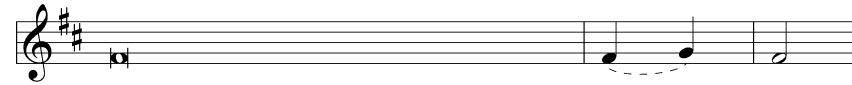


L Blessed be God, the Fa - ther, the Son, and the Ho - ly Spir - it.

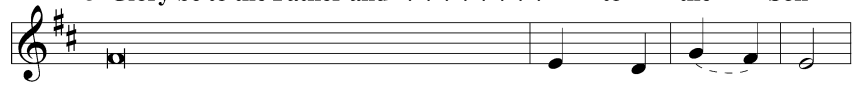


C O come, let us wor - ship Him.

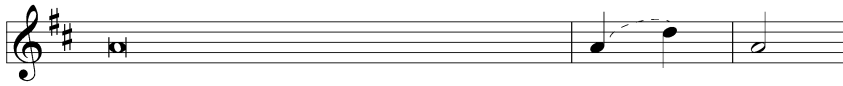
Venite *Psalm 95:1-7*



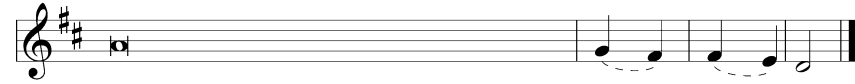
C 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord,
2 For the Lord is a great God
3 The sea is His, for He made it,
5 Glory be to the Father and to the Son



1 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our sal - va - tion.
2 and a great king a - bove all gods.
3 and His hand formed the dry land.
5 and to the Ho - ly Spir - it;



1 Let us come into His presence with thanks - giv - ing,
 2 The deep places of the earth are in His hand;
 3 O come, let us worship and bow - down,
 4 For He is our God,
 5 as it was in the be - gin - ning,



1 let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.
 2 the strength of the hills is His - al - so.
 3 let us kneel before the Lord, our mak - er.
 4 and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep - of His hand.
 5 is now, and will be for - ev - er. A - men.



☪ Blessed be God, the Fa - ther, the Son, and the Ho - ly Spir - it.



☩ O come, let us wor - ship Him.

Hymn: LSB 851, Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us



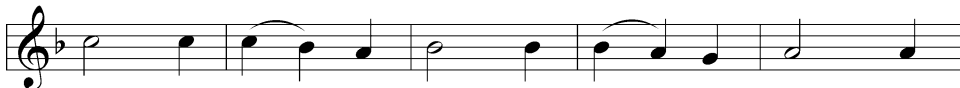
1 Lord of glo - ry, You have bought us With Your
 2 Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give You Glad - ly,
 3 Won - drous hon - or You have giv - en To our
 4 Lord of glo - ry, You have bought us With Your



life - blood as the price, Nev - er grudg - ing for the
 free - ly of Your own. With the sun - shine of Your
 hum - blest char - i - ty In Your own mys - te - rious
 life - blood as the price, Nev - er grudg - ing for the



lost ones That tre - men - dous sac - ri - fice;
 good - ness Melt our thank - less hearts of stone
 sen - tence, "You have done it all to Me."
 lost ones That tre - men - dous sac - ri - fice.



And with that have free - ly giv - en Bless - ings
 Till our cold and self - ish na - tures, Warmed by
 Can it be, O gra - cious Mas - ter, That You
 Give us faith to trust You bold - ly, Hope, to



count - less as the sand To the un - thank - ful
 You, at length be - lieve That more hap - py
 deign for alms to sue, Say - ing by Your
 stay our souls on You; But, oh, best of



and the e - vil With Your own un - spar - ing hand.
and more bless - ed 'Tis to give than to re - ceive.
poor and need - y, "Give as I have giv'n to you"?
all Your grac - es, With Your love our love re - new.

Readings from Holy Scripture

Jeremiah 15:15-21

O Lord, you know;

remember me and visit me,

and take vengeance for me on my persecutors.

In your forbearance take me not away;

know that for your sake I bear reproach.

Your words were found, and I ate them,

and your words became to me a joy

and the delight of my heart,

for I am called by your name,

O Lord, God of hosts.

I did not sit in the company of revelers,

nor did I rejoice;

I sat alone, because your hand was upon me,

for you had filled me with indignation.

Why is my pain unceasing,

my wound incurable,

refusing to be healed?

Will you be to me like a deceitful brook,

like waters that fail?

Therefore thus says the Lord:

"If you return, I will restore you,

and you shall stand before me.

If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,

you shall be as my mouth.

They shall turn to you,

but you shall not turn to them.

And I will make you to this people

a fortified wall of bronze;

they will fight against you,

but they shall not prevail over you,

for I am with you

to save you and deliver you,

declares the Lord.

I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,

and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Matthew 16:21-28

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

P: O Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

Responsory



- 1 Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly set in the heavens.
- 2 Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.
- 3 Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir - it.



- C** Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glo-ry dwells.

Sermon

With our lectionary schedule taking us through the book of Romans, this week's passage marks the twelfth installment of this series, and after this there's only two more to go -- so if you're getting tired of Romans and you want to take a break from Paul, don't worry, we're in the home stretch. But before we get there, we have to get through today's text. It is a truly difficult one: not difficult because it's hard to understand, but because it's so straightforward and plain. It's plain language that we simply can't get around. What's difficult for us is actually doing what it says.

Can you hear that passage and not squirm a little bit? There are no less than 14 imperative statements there -- can you hear all of that and not think of ways in which you've fallen short or not done at least one or two of what we're told? I can't. And if you can, I would be so bold as to say you may not be honest with yourself. Living as a Christian, living the kind of lifestyle that Scripture describes and expects from somebody who believes in Christ, is incredibly, impossibly difficult. Maybe we can do some of it, some of the time; but no one can do all of it, all of the time. So I want to get that out of the way first: in our understanding of God's Law and the good news of the Gospel, these kinds of commands will always in some way remind us of how imperfect we are, how we fall short, how constantly we're in need of God's forgiveness and God's gifts.

Because to hear all of this -- do this, do that -- might make us feel exhausted and unworthy. The effort it demands is enormous, and still we're always falling short. So I want you to keep that in mind through the rest of what I'm going to say today: no one's perfect; we always depend on the mercy of God to pick us up when we fall, and we always depend on the power of God given to us in the Holy Spirit, our Helper and Comforter, to actually do any of this in the first place. Any desire or ability we have to try to live as this passage tells us to live is a product of God's work in us, and as we inevitably stumble, we rely on His forgiveness and remember that none of it affects our standing in His sight. That righteousness (that state of being-right-with-God) comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

With that in mind, though, I want to unpack some of this bit by bit, because it does deserve some further explanation. The fact that we are saved completely outside of our own doing doesn't mean there aren't still expectations for us. Jesus tells us to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance," and that when we have by grace been connected to him ("I am the root and you are the branches," as he says) that we should then bear fruit just as a living, thriving branch buds and blossoms and bears good things.

So back to Romans. "Let love be genuine," in other words, "Don't just pretend to love others." Genuinely love them! Actually stay away from evil and cling hard onto what is good. Don't we hate it when people are falsely nice and polite, but then turn around and start backbiting? Few things hurt more than betrayal, someone you thought cared about you but really didn't. Don't just pretend to love others; truly love one another like brothers and sisters. Even make it a competition! Outdo each other in showing honor!

There's a competitiveness to human nature; we try to one-up others, we try to get ahead, we try to win. Often this leads to a lot of heartache and evil in the world, but this is such a clever way to harness human nature! Okay, if you're so competitive, don't pursue your own advantage; compete against one another in who can honor and serve others the most!

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. This is so important; it's repeated for extra emphasis. Bless and do not curse! When anyone speaks ill of you, or of Christians in general, bless them, the Bible says! What does it mean to bless? The Greek word is literally "to speak well about" something. It means to praise them, to only say good things about them, to call down God's blessing on them. Bless your persecutors and your enemies! Bless and do not curse them!

This is merely echoing Jesus himself, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." Who are your enemies? Who is persecuting you, or if not personally, those who are going after other Christians and churches? When you run into these people or these groups, do you bless them and pray for them? I know very well that this is not our normal reaction, not what's expected or encouraged among most people. The life of a Christian looks radically and fundamentally different from the "normal" ways of the world.

I'm going to dare to get specific about some of these things, and I hope if any of it offends you, that it does so only for the right reason. Do you hate the Democrats, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and Nancy Pelosi? Do you view them as enemies, dangerous to the Christian Church and to America as a whole? I bet some of you here would have to honestly say "yes." Do you therefore bless them, pray for them, not speak badly or falsely about them, but ask for God's grace and mercy on them? We make it a point to pray for all our government officials, both elected and appointed, no matter what party or end of the spectrum they're on.

Or perhaps some of you feel the same about Donald Trump? There's plenty of people, Christians included, who don't like him and don't think he's good for the country or Christianity. We ought to heed Romans here too, to bless and not to curse. This is not a partisan attitude or problem; we see the same thing on both sides of the political aisle, so I don't want you to think I'm picking on one side or the other. This same spiritual problem affects us all. This call to bless and pray for does not mean we have to approve of anyone's words or actions; it doesn't mean we support them in what they do. But we are not permitted to be nasty or combative or slanderous about it.

Or other issues; when you see someone who's proudly showing their sinfulness in your face, what do you think? The gay pride parades, the transgender activism, the "I'm proud that I had an abortion" people. Or the callousness and disregard for human life just because a person is the "wrong" skin color or from another country; just because they're not a legal resident, or they don't speak English well enough. If you see a homeless guy passed out with a bottle of liquor in his hand, do you think "Huh, serves him right"? Do you have pity? Do you see a creature for whom Christ died, a lost sheep that God wishes to be reconciled with Himself? I admit, it's hard. Being a Christian is hard sometimes. One of my favorite authors, a man named Chesterton, once said "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and [therefore] left untried."

To boil it down, who in your sight is the enemy? Who is ruining our country, or against Christianity? Who represents in your mind the face of evil today? These are the people we are called to bless. Does that sound bizarre? It is most certainly counter-intuitive and unnatural for us. If your enemy hungers, feed him. If he thirsts, give him a drink. There was a great example of this a few years ago; when there were protests against Chick-fil-a, there were a couple of stories where the manager came outside to the protestors with cold waters and lemonades. That's a literal example of giving your enemy something to drink!

That leads us to the second part of that verse, and when Paul speaks here, he's quoting from Proverbs 25: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." The image of burning coals makes it sound like the reason we'd do that is to get some kind of joy out of their shame. But even that is for their benefit: to receive love and kindness from someone you've just harmed should shame you, and perhaps the guilty conscience will lead to repentance.

This was really the idea behind the non-violent resistance of the civil rights movement. Fighting back just makes your enemy double down and harden in their opposition. A lot of people today seem to think "Well, all that matters is that I'm right and they're wrong -- and the ends justify the means. We have to do whatever necessary to stop them, because their goals or their vision for the country or their beliefs are so harmful."

But the ends do not justify the means. An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. It is only when you refuse to hit back that you start to change the minds and hearts of others. It's no coincidence that Martin Luther King was a pastor and that he championed this approach; certainly many of his contemporaries did want to fight back.

There's been plenty of violent revolutions over the centuries, and normally violence just leads to more violence; anger begets more anger. One regime is replaced with another, but little actually changes. Real, meaningful change most often happens by blessing the enemy, by turning the other cheek. The Christian way, the Godly way, to defeat an enemy is by making them into a friend, into a brother or sister in Christ as a fellow believer.

So I implore you, especially as this year's election cycle is heating up and it's sure to be a rough one: think before you make a mean-spirited comment about either candidate or either party, whoever "the other side" is. Pause before you share a post on Facebook, no matter how hilarious it may seem. Remember the 8th Commandment in the Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way." Everything in our politics, our society, our nation seems to have become "us versus them," whoever the "us" and the "them" may be. All that matters, so it seems, is allegiance to your own. These are exactly the kinds of divisions and hostility that Christ came to destroy!

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Yes, there is punishment for sins. Yes, there will be consequences for all enemies of God and of the Christian Church who do not repent and believe. Yes, we should not shy away from clear statements of God's Law. But that punishment, those consequences are for God to carry out, not us. We have to tell our boys that, over and over again: yes, what your brother did was wrong; yes, we're going to deal with it. But you leave him alone -- it's the parents' place, not yours. It's God's place to punish, not ours. Our place, our designated role is to bless, to seek peace, to show kindness, to be humble.

The end of this passage is a summary statement: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." We are called to act exactly as the world does not expect. Because God acted exactly as we would not expect. Confronted by our sin and rebellion, we would expect Him to respond in wrath. He did not. Seeing us turn from Him, we would expect Him to turn from us, but no. Rather than setting His back to His sheep who wander, He pursues the one who is lost until He finds it. And when He has found it, He rejoices and carries it home. He did this by becoming what we are. "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Jesus, "made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." It makes no sense to a world that does not know Jesus, and it contradicts every instinct. But Jesus has overcome evil with good. That's God's way; may it be our way too.

Confession of Faith *Apostles' Creed*

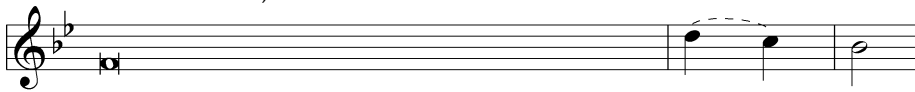
I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Christian Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

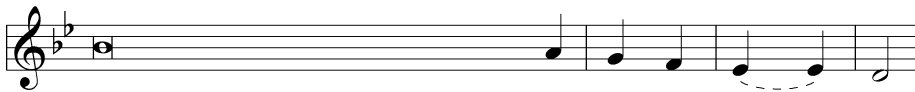
Offering

At this point in our worship, we would ordinarily collect an offering. We are called to be good stewards of the things God has given to us, which includes helping others and supporting the proclamation of the Gospel; we worship the Lord with our songs, our prayers, and also our offerings. If you would like to make an offering to help support our ministry, you can do that at www.christlutheranchurchms.org/ Scroll down to the bottom of the page, and you will see the link to give via PayPal.

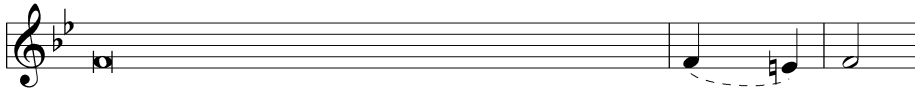
Canticle *Te Deum, LSB 223-225*



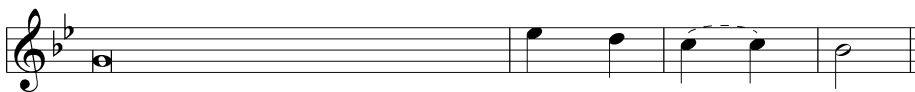
1 We praise You, O God; we acknowledge You to be the Lord.
 2 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
 3 The noble army of martyrs praise — You.



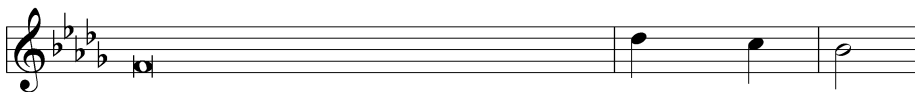
1 All the earth now worships You, the Fa-ther ev - er - last - ing.
 2 heaven and earth are full of the majes - ty of Your glo - ry.
 3 The holy Church throughout all the world does ac - knowl-edge You:



1 To You all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the pow'rs there-in.
 2 The glorious company of the apostles praise — You.
 3 The Father of an infinite majesty; Your adorable, true, and on - ly Son;
 4 You are the king of glory, O — Christ;



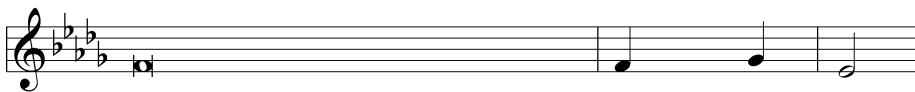
1 To You cherubim and seraphim con - tin - ual - ly do cry:
 2 The goodly fellowship of the proph-ets praise — You.
 3 also the Holy Ghost, the Com-fort - er.
 4 You are the everlasting Son of the Fa - ther.



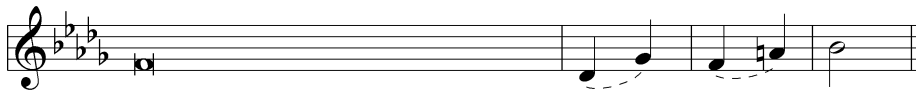
5 When You took upon Yourself to de - liv - er man,
 6 You sit at the right hand of God



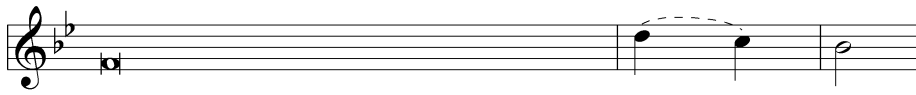
5 You humbled Yourself to be born of a vir - gin.
 6 in the glory of the Fa - ther.



5 When You had overcome the sharpness of death,
 6 We believe that You will come



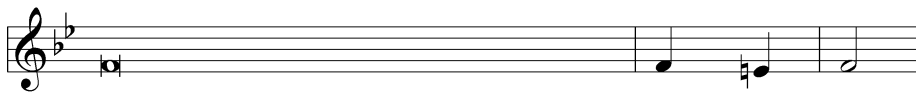
5 You opened the kingdom of heaven to all be - liev - ers.
6 to be - our - judge.



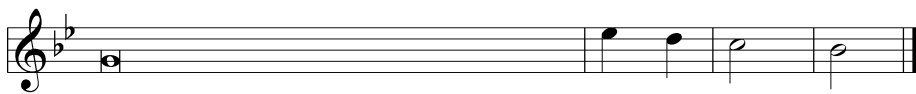
7 We therefore pray You to help Your ser - vants,
8 O Lord, save Your people and bless Your . . . her - i - tage.
9 Grant, O Lord, to keep us this day with - out - sin.



7 whom You have redeem - ed with Your pre - cious blood.
8 Govern them and lift them up for - ev - er.
9 O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy up - on - us.



7 Make them to be numbered with Your saints
8 Day by day we magni - fy You.
9 O Lord, let Your mercy be upon us, as our trust is in You.



7 in glory ev - er - last - ing.
8 And we worship Your name for - ever and ev - er.
9 O Lord, in You have I trusted; let me never be con - found - ed.

Kyrie



C Lord, have mer-cy; Christ, have mer-cy; Lord, have mer-cy.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.



L O Lord, hear my prayer.



C And let my cry come to You.

P: Almighty God, Your Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption. Grant us courage to take up our cross daily and follow Him wherever He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

P: Lord, in Your mercy...

C: **Hear our prayer.**

P: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, You have safely brought us to the beginning of this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Benedicamus and Benediction



L Let us bless the Lord.



C Thanks be to God.



P The grace of our Lord † Je - sus Christ and the love of God

L The grace of our Lord † Je - sus Christ and the love of God



and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with you all.
and the communion of the Holy Spir - it be with us all.



C A - men.

Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

Thanks be to God!