

*Septuagesima
The Landowner, His Vineyard and the Laborers
The Last shall be First, and the First Last.*

February 1st, Year of our Lord 2026

The Reverend William Foy, Pastor



The First Sunday of Pre-Lent, Septuagesima (70 days), reminds us that God's grace is undeserved. The wages we receive after our human exertions are alone God's gracious gifts. The Second Sunday, Sexagesima (60 days), proclaims that grace is received passively, like good soil that brings forth much fruit from the Seed sown by the Sower. The Last Sunday before Lent, Quinquagesima (50 days), shows that grace is not easily understood. The disciples follow with fear and anxiety as Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. By grace our blind eyes are opened that we may also "go up" to Jerusalem: with joyful, seeing eyes.

The three Gesima Sundays begin the Lenten Preparation for Easter. They take on the character of Lent, but mildly. The Alleluias and Gloria in Excelsis are dropped. Pictures and Crosses remain unveiled.



Order of Worship – Divine Service - Setting 3

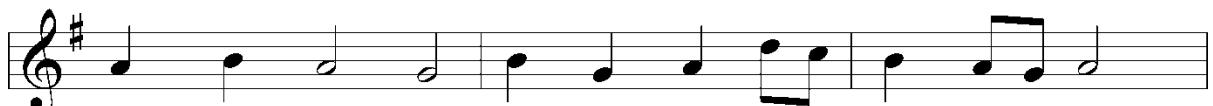
Preludes- Time for silent prayer and preparation for confession
Please rise and face the procession turning to the altar when the celebrant has passed by.

Procession Hymn- Word of God, Come Down on Earth

545



1 Word of God, come down on earth, Liv - ing rain from
2 Word e - ter - nal, throned on high, Word that brought to
3 Word that caused blind eyes to see, Speak and heal our
4 Word that speaks God's ten - der love, One with God be -



heav'n de - scand - ing; Touch our hearts and bring to birth
life cre - a - tion, Word that came from heav'n to die,
mor - tal blind - ness; Deaf we are: our heal - er be;
yond all tell - ing, Word that sends us from a - bove,



Faith and hope and love un - end - ing. Word al - might - y,
Cru - ci - fied for our sal - va - tion, Sav - ing Word, the
Loose our tongues to tell Your kind - ness. Be our Word in
God the Spir - it, with us dwell - ing, Word of truth, to



we re - vere You; Word made flesh, we long to hear You.
world re - stor - ing, Speak to us, Your love out - pour - ing.
pit - y spo - ken, Heal the world, by sin now bro - ken.
all truth lead us; Word of life, with one bread feed us.

Service of the Word

Invocation

P In the name of the Father and of the **+** Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

Please Kneel (or Stand)

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

Absolution

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the \ddagger Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen

Please Rise

Service of the Word

Introit - (*Congregation chants the bold stanzas*)



The cords of Sheol en- | tangled me;*
the snares of death con- | fronted me.

In my distress I called up- | on the LORD.*
From His temple He | heard my voice.

I love You, O | LORD, my strength.*
The LORD is my Rock and my Fortress and my De- |
liverer,
For You save a humble | people,*
but the haughty eyes | You bring down.

You have equipped | me with strength*
and made my way | blameless.

For this I will praise You, O LORD, among the |
nations,*
and sing | to Your name.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The cords of Sheol en- | tangled me;*
the snares of death con- | fronted me.
In my distress I called up- | on the LORD.*
From His temple He | heard my voice.

Kyrie



C Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

Gloria in Excelsis omitted until Easter



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.

Collect of the Day – *Prayed by Pastor*

O Lord, graciously hear the prayers of Your people that we who justly suffer the consequence of our sin may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness to the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Please be seated.

The Old Testament:

Exodus 17:1–7

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”

But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of

Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”



Gradual – Chanted by the cantor

Ps. 9:9–10, 18–19a

The LORD is a stronghold for | the oppressed,*
a stronghold in times of | trouble.

And those who know Your name put their | trust in You,*
for You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who | seek You.

For the needy shall not always be for- | gotten,*
and the hope of the poor shall not perish for- | ever.

A- | rise, O LORD!*
let not | man prevail.

The Epistle:

1 Corinthians 9:24—10:5

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Please rise and face the procession as the Word of God enters into your midst.

Tract for Septuagesima

Out | of the depths*

I cry to You, | O LORD!

O Lord, | hear my voice!*

Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for | mercy!

If You, O LORD, should mark in- | iquities,*

O Lord, | who could stand?

But with You there is for- | giveness,*

that You | may be feared.

The Holy Gospel:

Matthew 20:1–16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a Master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’

They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’

He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.

And on receiving it they grumbled at the Master of the house, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’

But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.

And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.

And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and
the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and
glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,

and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life \ddagger of the world to come. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hymn of the Day –O Word of God Incarnate

523



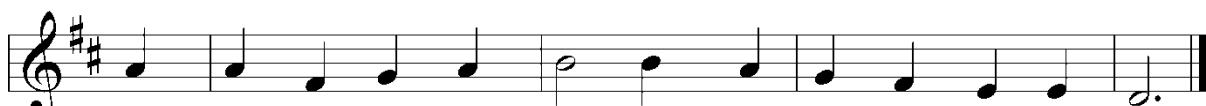
1 O Word of God in - car-nate, O Wis - dom from on high,
2 The Church from You, dear Mas-ter, Re-ceived the gift di - vine;
3 O make Your Church, dear Sav - ior, A lamp of bur - nished gold



O Truth un - changed, un - chang-ing, O Light of our dark sky:
And still that light is lift - ed O'er all the earth to shine.
To bear be - fore the na - tions Your true light as of old!



We praise You for the ra - diance That from the hal-lowed page,
It is the chart and com - pass That, all life's voy - age through,
O teach Your wan-d'ring pil - grims By this their path to trace



A lan - tern to our foot - steps, Shines on from age to age.
Mid mists and rocks and quick-sands Still guides, O Christ, to You.
Till, clouds and dark - ness end - ed, They see You face to face!

Sermon

Please rise.

Offertory

192



C Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -



new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -



way from Thy pres-ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it



**Prayer of the Church – *Prayed by Pastor*
Service of the Sacrament**

Preface

194



P The Lord be with you.



C And with thy spir - it.



P Lift up your hearts.



C We lift them up un - to the Lord.



P Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God.



C It is meet and right so to do.

Proper Preface – Chanted by the Pastor

Sanctus

195



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;

heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,
 ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est. Bless-ed is He,
 bless-ed is He, bless - ed is He that com-eth in the name of the Lord.
 Ho-san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est.

Lord's Prayer

196

P Our Father who art in heav - en, hal - low - ed be Thy name,
 Thy king - dom come, Thy will be done on earth as it
 is in heav - en; give us this day our dai - ly bread;
 and forgive us our tres - pass - es as we forgive those who
 tres - pass a - gainst us; and lead us not in - to
 temp - ta - tion, but deliver us from e - vil.



C For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the



glo - ry for - ev - er and ev - er. A - men.

The Verba - The Words Instituting the Lord's Supper

The Words of Our Lord

Pax Domini

197

198



P The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.



C A - men.

Agnus Dei

198



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that



tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us.



O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the



world, grant us Thy peace. A - men.

What we believe: The Sacrament of the Altar

We welcome to the Lord's Supper all those who are presently communicant members in good standing of Prince of Peace. If you have never received Holy Communion at Prince of Peace from Pastor Foy, please see him before you commune. Thank you

Distribution

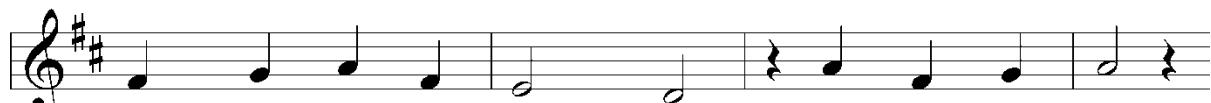
Distribution Hymns - *Please be seated.*

Seek Where You May to Find a Way

557



1 Seek where you may To find a way That
2 Seek whom you may To be your stay, None
3 Seek Him a - lone Who did a - tone, Who
4 My heart's de - light, My crown most bright, O



leads to your sal - va - tion. My heart is stilled,
can re - deem his broth - er. All help - ers failed;
did your souls de - liv - er. O seek Him first,
Christ, my joy for - ev - er. Not wealth nor pride



On Christ I build, He is the one foun - da - tion.
This man pre - vailed, The God-man and none oth - er,
All you who thirst For grace that fails you nev - er.
Nor fortune's tide Our bonds of love shall sev - er.



His Word is sure, His works en - dure; He o - ver - throws
Our Ser-vant-King Of whom we sing. We're jus - ti - fied
In ev - 'ry need Seek Him in - deed; To ev - 'ry heart
You are my Lord; Your pre - cious Word Shall guide my way



All e - vil foes; Through Him I more than con - quer.
Be - cause He died, The guilt - y be - ing guilt - less.
He will im - part His bless - ings with - out mea - sure.
And help me stay For - ev - er in Your pres - ence.

Now, my tongue, the myst'ry telling

630



1 Now, my tongue, the mys - t'ry tell - ing Of the glo - rious
 2 Giv'n for us, and con - de - scand - ing To be born for
 3 That last night at sup - per ly - ing Mid the Twelve, His
 4 Word made flesh, the bread He tak - eth, By His word His
 5 Glo - ry let us give and bless - ing To the Fa - ther



bod - y sing, And the blood, all price ex - cel - ling,
 us be - low, He with us in con - verse blend - ing
 cho - sen band, Je - sus, with the Law com - ply - ing,
 flesh to be; Wine His sa - cred blood He mak - eth,
 and the Son, Hon - or, thanks, and praise ad - dress - ing,



Which the Gen-tiles' Lord and King, Once on earth a -
 Dwelt, the seed of truth to sow, Till He closed with
 Keeps the feast its rites de - mand; Then, more pre - cious
 Though the sens - es fail to see; Faith a - lone the
 While e - ter - nal a - ges run; Ev - er too His



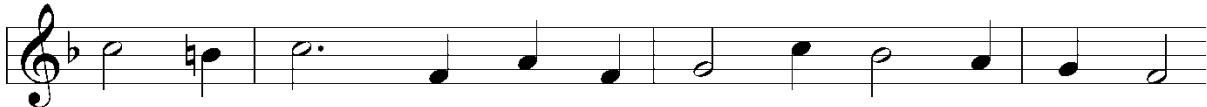
mong us dwell - ing, Shed for this world's ran - som - ing.
 won - drous end - ing His most pa - tient life of woe.
 food sup - ply - ing, Gives Him - self with His own hand.
 true heart wak - eth To be - hold the mys - ter - y.
 love con - fess - ing Who from both with both is One.

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless

566



1 By grace I'm saved, grace free and bound-less; My soul, be - lieve and
 2 By grace! None dare lay claim to mer - it; Our works and con - duct
 3 By grace God's Son, our on - ly Sav - ior, Came down to earth to
 4 By grace! This ground of faith is cer - tain; As long as God is



doubt it not. Why stag - ger at this word of prom - ise?
 have no worth. God in His love sent our Re - deem - er,
 bear our sin. Was it be - cause of your own mer - it
 true, it stands. What saints have penned by in - spi - ra - tion,



Has Scrip - ture ev - er false - hood taught? No! Then this word must
 Christ Je - sus, to this sin - ful earth; His death did for our
 That Je - sus died your soul to win? No, it was grace, and
 What in His Word our God com - mands, Our faith in what our



true re - main: By grace you too will life ob - tain.
 sins a - tone, And we are saved by grace a - lone.
 grace a - lone, That brought Him from His heav'n - ly throne.
 God has done De - pends on grace— grace through His Son.

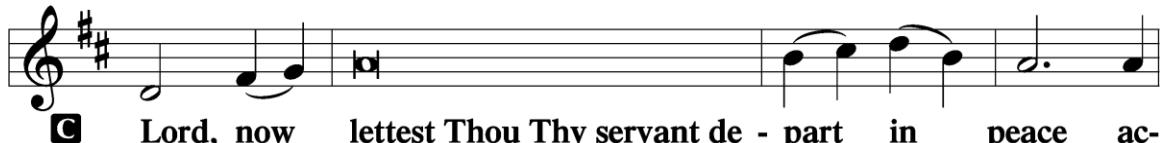
5 By grace to timid hearts
 that tremble, In
 tribulation's furnace tried,
 By grace, in spite of fear
 and trouble, The Father's
 heart is open wide. Where
 could I help and strength
 secure If grace were not
 my anchor sure?

6 By grace! On this I'll rest
 when dying; In Jesus'
 promise I rejoice; For
 though I know my heart's
 condition, I also know my
 Savior's voice. My heart is
 glad, all grief has flown
 Since I am saved by grace
 alone.

Please rise.

Nunc Dimitis

199



C Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac-



cord - ing to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,



which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,



a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy

people Is - ra-el. Glo - ry be to the Father and
 to the Son and to the Ho-ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,
 is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A-men.

Thanksgiving

200

A O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,

C and His mercy endureth for - ev - - er.

Post-Communion Collect

201

Salutation and Benedicamus

201

P The Lord be with you.

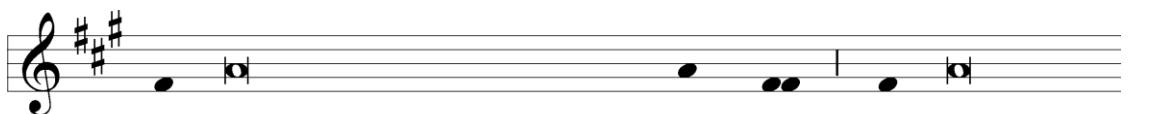
C And with thy spir - it.

A Bless we the Lord.

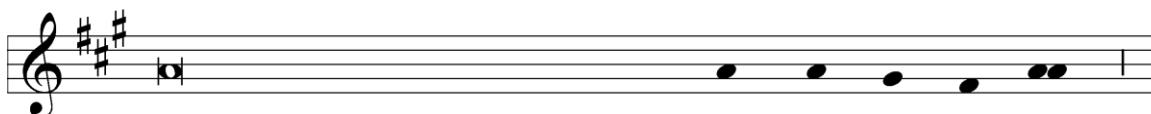
C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

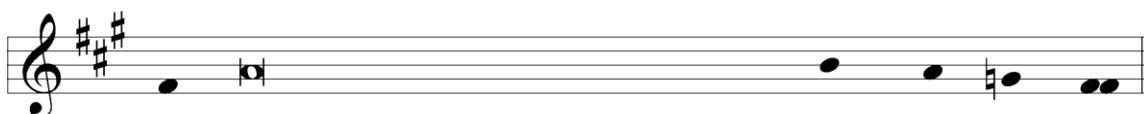
202



P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and \ddagger give you peace.



C A-men, a-men, a - men.

Please face the procession until the celebrant has passed, then face back towards the altar.

Closing Hymn: O Christ, our hope, our hearts' desire

553



1 O Christ, our hope, our hearts' de - sire, Cre -
2 How vast Your mer - cy to ac - cept The
3 But now the bonds of death are burst, The
4 O let Your might - y love pre - vail To



a - tion's might - y Lord, Re - deem - er of the
bur - den of our sin And bow Your head in
ran - som has been paid; You now as - cend the
purge us of our pride That we may stand be -



fall - en world, By ho - ly love out - poured:
cru - el death To make us clean with - in.
Fa - ther's throne In robes of light ar - rayed.
fore Your throne By mer - cy pu - ri - fied.

5 Christ Jesus, be our present joy, Our future great reward; Our only glory, may it be To glory in the Lord!

6 All praise to You, ascended Lord; All glory ever be To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Through all eternity!

Altar Flowers Are given to the glory of God and in prayerful expectation of His guidance and mercy in this coming Lenten season.

2025 Contribution Statements: Your contribution statements for 2025 are available on the table at the top of the stairs when you come in.

Eggcelent Easter Egg Hunt: Please mark your calendars for our Annual Egg Hunt Saturday March 28th at 1:00 pm. Sign-up sheets are located in the foyer for attendance and items needed for the egg hunt. We will need those items by March 8th so that we can prepare the eggs. Thank you. Please invite your family and friends to join the fun.

Chili Cook-off Fund raiser: Next Sunday the 8th is our annual chili cook-off following our Worship Service. We will be raising funds to help the Josh Hardesty family with some of their many medical bills. Please come, make as generous a donation as you feel you can and enjoy the friendship and good food. This will replace our monthly potluck. Please bring a crockpot of chili to share if you enjoy making chili. Chicken noodle soup will also be available. A sign up sheet and items we need for lunch is on the whiteboard in the foyer. Hope you can join us for the fun.

Willows Easter Baskets: A sign-up sheet for items for the Willow residents is now posted by our door. Donated items may be placed in the box marked Willows. If you prefer to make a cash donation to help purchase these items, a donation jar marked Willows is also available. Both the box and jar are located in Pastor's former office off the Narthex.

The Willows currently has 32 male and 36 female residents. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Thank you,

VBS ~ June 10-12, 2026 THEME: Who Is Jesus for ME? We have just begun planning for this years VBS. Dates are June 10-12 in the evening. We will be putting up sign up sheets for the things needed after Easter as there is much to do for that High and Holy Season first. Our first organizational meeting will be Tuesday the 24th of February at 6 pm. If you would be interested in helping in any way, teacher, crafts, music, food, other support roles, please join us for a simple potluck meal and discussion. If you could bring a small thing to share i.e. salad, chips, dessert or beverages please do so. But that is not a requirement for coming. We want you. Thank you. Becky Wilburn.

Lutheran World Relief personal care kits. A donation box is located in the office across from the counters office. Items needed new dark colored bath towels, nail clippers, tooth brushes, bars of bath soap & combs. Items may be placed in the box located in Pastor's former office off the Narthex.

Seminary Gift Emporium We will also continue to collect money for gift cards for the Seminary Gift Emporium throughout the year. A jar is located by the flower chart in the Narthex.

Valpo Homeless Shelter Meal: The shelter provides 3 meals for 50+ people in need everyday. Prince of Peace will deliver a meal February 7th. A sign-up sheet of items needed is located in the foyer. Thank you for giving a meal for those in need.

Seminary Clothing Co-op: Please bring clothing bagged and in good condition with no stains or tears for men, women and children. Socks and undergarments must be new and in original package. If you are going to Ft. Wayne and would be willing to deliver some of the clothes, please see Joann.

Eggs in the Kitchen fridge: There are eggs this week. PLEASE ONLY TAKE 1!

SUNDAY - Bible Study: We are finishing the 2nd Epistle of St. Peter and then we will begin Proverbs after the Divine Service, in the Parish Hall. We begin at 10:45
For the coming Week

Organist: Jennifer Symer **Elders:** Josh, Carl, Jeff, Paul

Altar Guild Servers: Cheryl, Deb, Cathy, Helen

Morning Divine Service: Wednesday 11:00 am

Weekday Bible Study: Wednesday 11:45

Bethesda Services: Wednesday 4:00pm

Veterans: As requested with pastor.

PRAYERS FOR:

All who mourn the loss of loved ones especially those martyred

PRAYER FOR SHUT-INS: Mike Foy, Darlene McDonald, Marilyn Skinner, Jim & Lois Brown, Ruth Koeppen

THOSE IN THE MILITARY: Craig McCall, Seneca Newkirk

PRAYER FOR HEALING:

Bonnie Broviak- Recovery
Jim Brown- Remission
Robert Sprout - Cancer
Greg Mohlke Kidney Transplant
Ellen Strutz – Cancer
Mary Cruz – ALS
Betty Sut - Cancer
Marilyn Skinner – Cancer
Lillie Johnston – Alzheimers
Lois Brown – Parkinsons
Pete Sut – Cancer
Jerry Weingarden – Cancer
Bob Granzow – Dr Care
Micah McKay – Recovery
Please give the Church Office updates Thank you Pastor

Pat Maile – Dr Care
Dave McCall – Dr Care
Mike Arnold - Cancer
Bill Lomas – Lung issues
Jo Thompson – Cancer
Josh Hardesty - recovering
Ginny Fox - Cancer
Carol Becker – Dr Care
Nancy McIntosh - Cancer
Florence Farris – Cancer
Baron Edmiston – Cancer
Paula Rukavina – Cancer
Mamie Raschke – Rehab
Bob Steingass – Therapy

THOSE EXPECTING A CHILD

THOSE CELEBRATING BAPTISMAL BIRTHDAYS

Deb Lomas 2/3 **Katie Wandasiewicz 2/3** **Cypress McIntosh 2/5**
Valarye McIntosh 2/5

THOSE CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

Samantha Elkins 2/1 **Ron Wandasiewicz 2/2** **Lilly Layton 2/4**
Vivien Griechen 2/6 **Leslie Dorulla 2/7**

THOSE CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES

Josh & Lindsay Hardesty 2/3

"The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together." - St. John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on Eph. 5

234 W. Division Road – Valparaiso, IN 46385
princeofpeacelutheranchurch@gmail.com (219) 464-4911
Bookkeeper/Treasurer: popbookstreasurer@gmail.com
The Reverend William Foy, Pastor Cell Phone: (219) 613-3496
reverendfoy@gmail.com

Chrismon Corner

Septuagesima 1Cor 9.24---10.5



Wreath with cross. The wreath is a symbol of victory. The cross is where Jesus finished the race to win the salvation of the world

St. Paul speaks of the Christian faith with an athletic metaphor of running a race to win a prize. Only one person wins the victory wreath. And in order to win it, an athlete must train, work hard, be diligent, and persevere.

Jesus has run the race and won the prize. He has gained the victor's wreath for finishing in first place. But we are His followers. As His disciples and followers, we too discipline ourselves. Not so that we can earn our own prize, but rather because we share in His. We run the race knowing that we too have a share in His prize. And that reality should not make us lazy, but it should encourage us to train even harder, knowing that the prize of eternal life given to the Victor is given to us as well. For St. Paul says that we are "more than conquerors."

Even as we train and practice self-discipline, even as we run with perseverance, we keep our eye on the prize so as not to lose it. We know that though our efforts do not earn us salvation, our efforts do bear fruit for the good of the kingdom, bringing more and more people to the victor's stand with us to share the prize.

As St. Paul teaches us, there is a prize awaiting us. And so we train for victory like an athlete. We run the race with joy knowing that there is a crown waiting for us at the finish line, not merely a perishable wreath, but an imperishable.

And if we are honest with ourselves, we are the least worthy of all of God's creatures to cross the finish line. And this, is all the more reason to rejoice and to boast in Christ alone: for "the last will be first, and the first last." The Lord is generous! The Lord is gracious! The Lord keeps His promises! Thanks be to God!