

The Why in Our Worship



Ordinary Words Proper Meanings Extraordinary Grace

The Why in Our Worship

As a service to our members and our visitors, we have prepared these brief explanations of the worship practices of our Lutheran Church and of the Christian Church as a whole. We hope to provide a rationale for why we do what we do when we do it. We hope to show that much of the content of the liturgy is not only Scriptural, but Scripture itself. We hope that these explanations answer basic questions about what you see and hear as we gather around the Word and Sacrament here at Christ Lutheran Church. We hope as well that you will feel free to come to us with further questions that you may have. For a picture of the worship of the early church, see Acts 2:42-47.

The Pastor's Vestments

Vestments hide the man and emphasize his words and actions in the stead of, by the authority of, and in keeping with his call from Christ. When the pastor baptizes, Christ baptizes. When the pastor distributes the Holy Supper, Christ distributes the Holy Supper. When the pastor preaches, Christ preaches. When the pastor absolves someone's sins, Christ absolves. Christ says to His disciples, "*He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.*" (Luke 10:16).

Our pastor wears an alb and stole. The alb was the common garb of professionals in the Roman Empire at the time of the early church. By the fifth century it had become a specifically Christian vestment. The alb is most commonly white, symbolizing the righteousness of Christ, which the pastor administers in Word and Sacrament and by which alone he, a sinner himself, is able to carry out the daunting and humbling task of the ministry of the Word.

Roman senators wore the stole as a symbol of their office. With time, the stole became a symbol of the pastoral office, and has since been worn by those ordained into that office. While any elder or deacon serving within the divine service may vest in the alb, only the pastor wears the stole, to symbol his responsibility as the overseer in God's service. The stole has also been understood historically as a symbol of the yoke of Christ, to whom the pastor is accountable for his every word and action, and from whom he has received the call to bring the weary and heavy laden into Christ's rest.

The Invocation (In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit)

As Christian men, women, and children, everything we do is to be done in the name of the only true God. His name was first placed upon us in our Baptism and it is in His name that we serve as ambassadors to those around us. It is a great comfort and encouragement, then, when we begin our service with a reminder of the saving waters of our Baptism and invoke the power of our loving God's name. We are His and He is ours. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? Amen, yes it shall be so. See Matthew 28:19:20; Romans 6.

Confession and Absolution

Reminded of our Baptism and of God's love in the invocation, we now approach Him and confess to Him who and what we are. We are honest, knowing God already knows our sins, but also knowing that it is good and right for us to openly admit them, confident of His forgiveness and mercy. After we tell God who and what we are in and of ourselves, God then tells us who and what we are in His Son, Jesus Christ. God tells us this through the mouth of His called servant, the pastor. We may enter church as a doubting, sin-stained, and scared flock, but we leave reassured, confident, and motivated by God's grace. See 1 John 1:8-10; James 5:16; Psalms 32 & 51; Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; John 20:21-23;

The Sign of the Cross

One of the oldest of Christian symbols, dating back to the second century by some estimates, the sign of the cross is a powerful reminder of our Lord Jesus' love. It was on a cross He died for our sins. It was on a cross that He first gave His body and blood, which we receive in Holy Communion. It was by Christ's cross that God's anger was turned to compassion. This cross was placed upon our head and our hearts at our Baptism.

The sign of the cross is also a confession of the Holy Trinity. All that is true about the invocation is true of this sign as well. We remember our Baptism, we call upon God's power to

save and comfort, and we remember that we are His and He is ours. The connection of the pastor's absolution with the sign of the cross is especially appropriate since repentance and forgiveness is really a daily reliving of our Baptism where we first died to sin and rose to life. See Galatians 6:14; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:14, 15.

Lord Have Mercy

The *Kyrie*, or *Lord Have Mercy*, is the first prayer of our service. In the Common Service it is included in the confession of sins. In the Service of Word and Sacrament it follows the absolution (where pastor forgives us in Christ's place). This prayer is the cry of faith raised to heaven in the confident hope that the Lord is our help in every trial, trouble, and temptation. Really, when you think about it, the whole Christian life is one big *Kyrie*, as we beg God in His grace to look not upon our sin but upon sacrifice of His Son and to grant us what is best for us at that time and place. As Luther said on his death bed, "We are all beggars." Thank God for His generous hands and abundant mercy. See Matthew 15:22; Luke 17:13; Luke 18:13.

Glory to God in the Highest

Renewed and forgiven, reassured and empowered, we now burst into a song of praise to our God. One of the oldest songs of the Church—first recorded use is in the 6th century—*Gloria in Excelsis* is a powerful confession of who God is and what He has done. When we consider these things, how can we not praise him? While the tune may change, the text will never lose its power. What a joy to sing this song with the angels! See Luke 2:14; John 2:29.

Prayer of the Day

The Prayer of the Day is what the Church calls a Proper, that is, a part of the liturgy that varies from week to week, reflecting each Sunday's theme, which is set by the Holy Gospel. As a congregation, we pray that the message of the week may take root in our hearts, that we may live what we hear, and that we may grow in our faith, especially in our faith in and understanding of the specific truth of the Gospel proclaimed that week. This prayer, like all Christian prayer, is offered to the Father through the merits of His crucified and risen Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. See John 14:6; John 16:23.

The Word

Now we dig into the Word of God together as God's flock. The readings for each Sunday are based on a pericope, which is an organization of readings for the church year. Each Sunday, we focus on a different aspect of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, or of His rule in the Church's early history. There are customarily three readings, the first from the Old Testament or the Book of Acts, the second from the Epistles or the Revelation of St. John, and the third from one of the four Gospels.

The Psalm of the Day

The Psalms have always been important to the Church, serving as its main prayer book throughout history. In the Psalms we pray with Christ who also prayed them diligently and fervently. We also pray to Christ, who fulfilled many of the Psalms which were written to point to His coming. The Psalm of the Day is chosen to fit with the theme of the day.

The Verse of the Day

This verse is chosen to express the theme for the day. This verse can be read, chanted by the pastor or a cantor, or sung by the choir. This verse provides a rich opportunity for our meditation throughout the entire week.

The Holy Gospel

It is the Gospel because it is the Good News of Jesus Christ; it is Holy because it is the Word of Christ Himself. The Holy Gospel sets the tone and determines the theme for the day; the Proper (the parts that change from week to week) look toward the Gospel and reflect the theme. We rise for the Holy Gospel as a special honor because the Gospels are a faithful record of what Christ Himself said and did. While all of Scripture is Christ's Word—a revelation about Him—the Gospels are a more intimate and personal presentation of the life and teaching of our Lord. Thus, after hearing of His love and faithfulness in this reading, we appropriately reply, "Praise be to you, O Christ!"

The Creed

As Christians we cannot help but confess what we believe and teach. The creeds are a faithful and beautiful explanation of just that. We can joyfully and boldly declare with Christians from the past, present, and future that we believe in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The creeds were developed in the past to defend against false teaching and to educate those interested in learning the faith. The creeds still serve both purposes today. We traditionally use the Nicene Creed when we celebrate Holy Communion and the Apostle's Creed when we do not. The Apostle's Creed has also historically been the baptismal creed, which served as the basis for catechetical instruction and which the [adult] catechumen would recite at his or her baptism.

Hymn of the Day

The Hymn of the Day is the chief hymn of the worship service. It is closely tied to the Holy Gospel for the Sunday and fits well with the general theme. Often this is a hymn that is more familiar to the congregation. Many churches have a Hymn of the Day selected or suggested for each Sunday of the Church year.

Sermon

The sermon is the eyes of the liturgy. Week after week the liturgy faithfully declares law and gospel to us through its Ordinaries (the parts that stay the same) and its Proper (the parts that vary from week to week), but it cannot do what the sermon can. The sermon takes the truth of the day and applies it specifically and appropriately to the people in the pews. It takes the universal, unchanging, life-changing truths of Word and Sacrament—of the liturgy itself—and drives it home for the people. A good sermon, like the liturgical traditions we have inherited, will contain both law and gospel, properly distinguished and appropriately applied. A good sermon may not always be what we want to hear, but what we need to hear; not what the current world thought has to say, but what God has said. Feel free to talk to pastor about his sermons and how he has done bringing God's truth home to you.

Prayer of the Church and Lord's Prayer

The Prayer of the Church and the Lord's Prayer serve as the bridge between the Service of the Word and the Service of Holy Communion in our worship service. Prayer is an integral part of the Christian life and a proper preparation for and response to both the message of the Scriptures

and the blessings of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The Prayer of the Church is usually a general prayer covering various aspects of our life and the needs of our society. The Lord's Prayer is the prayer Jesus Himself has taught us; it is the ultimate model for all Christian prayer. See 6:5-14; Luke 11:2-4; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

The Preface to the Sacrament

The Preface dialogue is one of the most ancient and universal elements of Christian worship. As we prepare to receive our Lord's true body and blood, we lift up our hearts to God and thank Him for this gracious meal. The proper prefaces (the part after the dialogue that pastor speaks) vary according to the season of the Church year, as your hymnal notes. These seasonal phrases focus our minds on an appropriate aspect of the life of our Lord, who comes to us in this wonderful meal. Those not receiving Holy Communion are invited to meditate on the words they hear, the hymns they sing, and the promise that they too receive the same forgiveness of sins as the communicants through their faith in Jesus Christ. If you are a visitor and interested in communing in the future, please speak to the pastor about any necessary preparation and instruction before approaching the altar.

Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus and Benedictus)

Taken from Isaiah chapter 6, the Sanctus is the song of the angels in the presence of the exalted Lord. It is a song we do well to learn now since we will have the joy of joining their chorus in everlasting life. The *Benedictus* ("Blessed is He who comes") is verse 26 from Psalm 118. The crowds greeted Jesus with this Psalm on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:38). We too appropriately greet him with the same song as He comes to us with that same body and blood with which He entered Jerusalem to die in our place. It is because our exalted Lord is risen and victorious that we can now receive His living body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Knowing what blessings shall soon grace our lips, how can those same lips not shout, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of heavenly hosts; heaven and earth are full of your glory" and "Hosanna," Hebrew for "Lord, save us"?

The Words of Institution

Without the Words of Institution, there is no Lord's Supper. It is Christ's Word, joined with bread and wine, which gives this Sacrament its power and attaches his promise to the elements. Christ, on the night he was betrayed, instituted this Sacrament as yet another way of saying "I love you" and "You are forgiven" to His flock on earth. His words give us the reassurance that what we receive is what He says it is: His very body and blood, given for us, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. These words, spoken clearly by the pastor, consecrate the bread and wine for use in the sacrament, remind us all of what we receive, and tell us all why we are receiving them ("given for you" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins" "in remembrance of Me"). See Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

O Christ, Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)

The first official use of the Agnus Dei, as far as we know, dates back to the early 8th century. It was in common use, however, for centuries earlier. It was used as the host was broken into enough small pieces for all the communicants. It was sung for as long as necessary. It is taken from the words of St. John the Baptist in John 1:29. In the Agnus Dei, we adore the risen Christ who is coming to us with His saving body and blood.

The Words of Distribution

If you listen carefully during the distribution of Holy Communion, you will hear the pastor speaking words to the members receiving Christ's body and blood. These words, although they vary, usually reinforce the fact that what they are receiving is Christ's true body and blood. These words have become important throughout the years as some have denied the real presence of Christ's body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. After Communion, the pastor dismisses the communicants (those receiving communion) with a blessing.

The Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)

Simeon first sang this song after seeing the baby Jesus in the Temple. In Christ, Simeon recognized and praised the blessed fulfillment of God's saving promise, first made in the Garden of Eden. The song appears in Luke 2:29-32. We too can sing this marvelous song of praise and thanks with Simeon for we also have seen the Lord's salvation in Word and Sacrament and received tangible proof that God keeps His promises: Christ's life-giving body and blood.

The Benediction

Luther introduced the Aaronic blessing into our worship service. Before that various blessings may have been used and many times there were no blessings at all. This blessing is taken from Numbers 6:22-27. This was the blessing with which the LORD told Moses to have Aaron bless the Israelites. The Christian Church is the new Israel, the people of God, and it is only fitting that they are blessed in this way as well. As believing children of the heavenly Father, we leave the service confident of God's mercy, grace, love, and blessing.

Symbolism in the Church

Colors

White – symbolizes light, joy, purity, innocence, glory, perfection, the godhead, the Creator, eternity; color of the robe of the glorified Christ and the angels/saints in heaven

Violet/Purple – symbolizes mourning and penitence, humility, suffering, sympathy, fasting; also symbolic of royalty

Red – symbolizes divine zeal, fire, fervor; symbolic of the blood of the martyrs of the church, the truth of Christian teaching as reflected by the blood of Christ; also symbolizes the work and ministry of the church

Green – symbolizes nature, life and nourishment/growth

Black – symbolizes grief and sorrow; as the absence of color, black also symbolizes death

Blue – symbol of the sky and of hope

Gold – symbolizes royalty, riches, victory

Seasons of the Church Year

Advent:

The season of Advent (a Latin word meaning a “coming” or “arrival”) starts each church year by leading us to consider the three comings of Christ:

1. His first coming as the Babe of Bethlehem
2. His second coming on Judgment Day as the returning King
3. His continual coming in Word and Sacrament

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Advent:

“Stir Up”: These words begin the Prayer of the Day for each Sunday in Advent.

“Prepare the Way”: This is the message of the Old Testament Prophets who called God’s people to repentance and of John the Baptizer who announced Jesus’ arrival.

Advent Colors: The blue of our paraments symbolizes the hope of God’s people who trust in their loving, unfailing Savior and King.

Advent Wreaths: The circle of candles represents hope in the Light of the World (Jesus), whom the powers of darkness cannot overcome. Lighting an additional candle each week of Advent reminds us of this truth.

Emmanuel (or Immanuel): is Hebrew for “God with us.” Isaiah the prophet promised that the Lord would come to be with his people (Isaiah 7:14).

Messiah: is the Hebrew word meaning “anointed one,” that is the one chosen to redeem sinners. The Greek translation of this word is “Christ.”

Christmas:

Christmas (a shortened form of the old English term “Christ’s Mass,” the festival worship service for Christ’s birth) and the twelve days that follow are a time which the church celebrates the Savior’s birth—the coming of the Light of the World as an infant. It is our opportunity to celebrate God’s greatest gift to us and the hope that he brings in a world troubled by spiritual darkness.

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Christmas:

Luke 2: In Luke chapters one and two the story of Jesus’ birth is told in great detail. Many families hold have the custom of reading this chapter each Christmas.

Angels: appear as messengers of God and in large numbers over the fields of Bethlehem to praise God and announce the Savior’s birth to shepherds.

The Stable: traditionally held to be the humble place for Jesus’ birth. Recreating the nativity scene has been a tradition among Christians since the days of Francis of Assisi.

Candles/Colors: candles of white, the liturgical color for Christmas, signify the Light of the World, our Lord Jesus, who brings the enlightening presence of God among us.

Christmas trees/Wreaths of evergreen: symbols of the life eternal which Christ brings us. Tree lights and ornaments remind us of the gifts brought to the baby Jesus by the magi.

Nativity scenes: help to focus on the spiritual celebration of Christmas. During the 12 days of Christmas, one may introduce the figures of the magi, moving closer to the Holy Child day by day until they arrive on January 6th, Epiphany.

Epiphany:

Epiphany (a Greek word meaning “appearing” or “revealing”—the revealing of God in his Son to the nations of the world) celebrates Christ’s incarnation (God became a man) for all people of the world, whether Jew or Gentile. Epiphany celebrates the discovery that a Savior *has* come, sent by God, to bring righteousness into our world and to reveal the unimaginable depth of God’s love. The magi discovered that revelation in a baby lying in a manger. John heard that revelation in God’s voice at Jesus’ baptism. And a merry wedding party at Cana experienced that revelation in a special gift of wine.

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Epiphany:

Luke 2: Simeon’s words (vs.29-32) reveal the true identity and mission of the baby Jesus.

Magi: visit the baby, representing all the nationalities of the world who hear of God’s Son and come to worship him.

The Star: was the celestial sign of a royal birth that drew the magi or astrologers to seek the newborn King.

Light: is an ancient Epiphany symbol. To be “in the light” was to be alive and well in a right relation with God. The New Testament calls Christ the Light of the World.

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh: the gifts of the magi point to royalty.

Water and wine: are Epiphany symbols because early Gospel lessons for the day speak of the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God at his *baptism* or the beginning of his public ministry at the *wedding of Cana*, where he turned water into wine.

Lent:

Lent (an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “spring.”) was traditionally a time of preparation for persons being instructed in the Christian faith before their baptism. Today Lent calls us to take time out and look back on the impact of our baptism on our lives. In repentance we ask our Lord to clear our hearts and lives of sin’s self-centeredness. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday’s somber repentance and leads us to Holy Week’s bitter story and Easter’s joy in Christ’s resurrection.

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Lent:

Psalm 51: a Psalm of repentance, just as Lent is a time for repentance.

The omission of “Alleluia”: begins with the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and continues through Easter morning. This longstanding custom dates back to the fifth century. Bidding “alleluia” farewell dates back at least to the eleventh century. We bid “alleluia” farewell in recognition of the penitential character of Lent, when we focus on a reinvigorated reliving of our Baptism in daily repentance and contrition, being buried with Christ to be raised with Him again on Easter.

Mark of Ashes on the foreheads of many Christians on Ash Wednesday. The Jews used ashes as an outward sign of repentance, a practice continued by early Christians, but discontinued by many of the reformers. So, while ashes today may remind us of dust and mortality, it is in keeping with Lent to see ashes as signs for our repentance, turning away from sin and being faithful to the Gospel.

Colors violet and black in churches (violet—for repentance—during most of Lent and black—for mourning—on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday).

“Giving up something for Lent” is a common practice in the Christian church. Our meager “sacrifice” serves to remind us of the great sacrifice our Savior made when he suffered and died in our place. It also reminds us in penitence to give up our sinful, self-serving ways.

Easter:

Easter (borrowed from the name of a pagan spring festival and is related to the fact that the sun rises in the *east*) is the earliest and most prominent Christian festival, celebrating Jesus’ resurrection from the grave in triumph over sin and death. On Easter, as in Lent, we reflect upon our baptism, for baptism joins all of God’s people with the death and resurrection of our Lord. The Easter Season is a time to rediscover the certainty of our salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Though Easter is only one season of the church year, we celebrate the joy that is ours through Easter every Sunday of the church Year, for every Sunday is a “little Easter.”

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Easter:

“Jesus Christ is risen today...”: This is a quote from the well-known Easter hymn, a Latin carol from the 14th century which was set in English by Charles Wesley in the 18th century.

Alleluia: a Hebrew word which means, “praise the Lord” that appears in the New Testament as part of the grand victory celebrations in the Book of Revelation (chapter 19).

“He is risen!” and the reply, **He is risen, indeed!”** are the ancient and always new shouts of Christian people at Easter.

White is the color for Easter's joyous celebration, although gold is sometimes the color for Easter Day and the following week.

Butterfly: The butterfly emerging from its tomb-like cocoon symbolizes Christ emerging from his empty tomb.

Easter lily: this flower, shaped like the bell of a trumpet announcing victory, grows from a seemingly dead bulb which is buried in order for it to grow and bloom.

Pentecost:

The Day of Pentecost closes the Easter season and opens the door to the liturgical **Season of Pentecost**, also called Ordinary Time in some church bodies, dozens of weeks that carry us from Pentecost Sunday back to the First Sunday in Advent.

The Day of Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church. On this day the ascended Jesus poured the Holy Spirit on his disciples, fulfilling his promise to send another Counselor who would teach them (John 14:26, 16:7). With a lively wind like the creative breath of God in Genesis 1, the Spirit energized the disciples, showing them the meaning of the Old Testament and how Jesus' life and death fulfilled it. And the Spirit baptized them with power to bring this Truth to the people of the world. In early centuries, Pentecost was another opportunity for those who could not be baptized on Easter.

The first half of the Church year from Advent through Pentecost reviews the life of Christ and his saving work for us. The second half stresses the life of the church. Following Pentecost, the Scripture readings tend to focus on Jesus' teachings and on the Spirit's work among us. Therefore, Christian preachers often use this season to apply the lessons of the first half of the Church Year to our Christian life

Signs, Phrases, and customs associated with Pentecost:

Pentecost, meaning the 50th day (after Easter), was taken over for Christian use from the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Weeks.

"Tongues" of Fire hovered over the disciples on Pentecost as a sign of the Lord's presence and power. John the Baptizer talked about a baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire which Jesus would bring. In the Middle Ages, roses were dropped from the rafters to simulate the tongues of fire. Trumpets were sounded to recall the sound of the mighty rushing wind.

A dove is the form in which the Spirit of the Lord was seen at Jesus' baptism, and for centuries artists have shown the Holy Spirit in that form. In the Middle Ages a live dove was set free inside the church to fly off or a carved one was let down by a rope.

Holy Spirit is the gift of the Lord—indeed, the Lord himself. The Spirit is given not just to the disciples but also to "you and your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39).

Baptism and acceptance of new members or confirmands is sometimes part of Pentecost Sunday. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is received through the waters of baptism.

Red, is the liturgical color for Pentecost Day, since it is the color of fire and fervor.

Green is the liturgical color for the Season of Pentecost. It signifies life and nourishment; the basic color of nature.

“A Season for Growing” describes this season, since the Gospel readings tend to include Jesus’ teachings for our spiritual growth.

The Gifts of the Spirit have been given to the Christian community for the common good (1 Corinthians 12).

The Fruits of the Spirit demonstrate that the Spirit lives within us. Paul says they are *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23).

General Pictures and Symbols



The Chi – Rho - This symbol is not really a symbol at all but a monogram. It is the oldest known monogram of Jesus Christ. It is sometimes known as a "Christogram". The Chi and the Rho (letters of the Greek alphabet) are the first three letters of Christ (cristos). The chi (c) = ch and the Rho (r)= r.

The IHS - The letters IHS are a monogram of the word Iasous, ('hsous), which is Greek for "Jesus". The letters are never written with periods after them. The period that would denote an abbreviation is represented by the line over the middle letter. This same symbol is often seen with the last letter as an "S," which is the same letter as the "C" in the Greek.



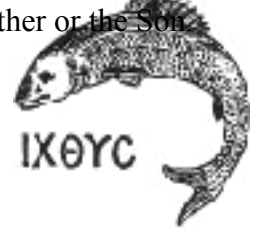
Alpha and Omega - I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am the beginning and the end," says the Lord, "Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8) The Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the Omega is the last letter of the alphabet. In today's terms Jesus would have said, "I am the A and the Z, the beginning and the end." He was in existence before time began and will be present at the end of time, even after the age. The Alpha and Omega with the crown represent Christ ruling from beginning to end.

I.N.R.I. - Initial letters for Latin inscription on the cross: Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Symbol for Jesus.

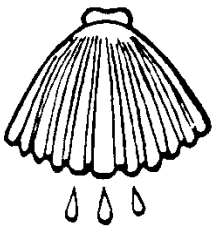
I.N.R.I.



Shield of the Trinity - A neat explanation of the Trinity. In each circle are three Latin words; *Pater, Filius and Spus Scus* (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In the middle is the word *Deus* (God). The connecting lines inward read *Est* (is). The outer lines read *Non Est* (is not). Thus the symbol reads: The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son.



The Fish - A very early Christian symbol (one of the first). The fish is an acronym: each letter in the Greek word for fish (Ichthus) represents another word. The "I" = Jesus, the "X" = Christ, the "Θ" = of God, the "Y" = Son, and the "C" = Savior (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior). The Ichthus fish is one of, if not the first, Christian creed.



Escallop Shell - The shell represents the sacrament of Baptism (calling to mind especially Jesus' baptism). Pictures sometimes show John the Baptist baptizing Jesus by pouring water onto his head. (Pouring water on the person's head, as well as full immersion, were both practiced by the early church as valid forms of baptism. In order for the shell to depict baptism, the shell must be pointed down and have water dripping from it (the three drops of water are symbolic of the Trinity).

Chalice/Bread – The chalice and/or loaf of bread with grapes/wheat represent the sacrament of Holy Communion. In this sacred meal we receive Jesus' body and blood with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins