

Welcome to Lent!

Today's service, titled 'Invocavit', marks the beginning of our 40 days of Lent. This Sunday is called 'Invocavit' because in the Middle Ages, the Introit of the Latin Mass began with this word. It translates into English, 'When he calls to me'. As we begin the penitential season of Lent, we are encouraged to be confident in God – who endures temptation, suffering, and death for sinners, who hears the prayers of the penitent, and who forgives sin for Christ's sake.

We're reminded of the penitential nature of Lent with our new paraments. Purple is a color used to show mourning and contrition, which is why it is used for the Lenten penitential season. In Jesus' time, purple was an expensive color, usually only worn by royalty. Jesus wore a purple robe as the soldiers mocked Him for claiming to be the King of the Jews. How ironic.

Begin by looking at the altar. There are two altar scarves, just like Advent. Thus, the two penitential seasons, Advent and Lent, are connected visually with the scarves. We remember our sinful condition in these two seasons - how we can't pave our own way to heaven. We fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We need a substitute for us. That's why the bound lamb is depicted on the altar scarves.



Christ, as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), allows himself to be bound by Pilate and the Jews, so that He could be the once and for all sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10, 12), which is depicted by the crucifix on the altar. As the altar is the place of sacrifice in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:24), the altar is where we receive the bound lamb sacrificed in our place when we eat and drink the Lord's Supper (1

Corinthians 11:26). The symbols on the burse and the veil teach us what lies behind it: the bound lamb Himself, who anxiously awaits to forgive our sin. The chasuble also has the symbol of the bound lamb on the back. This vestment is only worn when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, when the bound lamb is placed into our mouths.

Looking at the pulpit fall, we see how the bound lamb comes to us: in bread and wine. In this festive meal, we eat the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us to cover the penalty and eternal punishment of our sin. This meal gives Jesus' true body and blood to you, forgiving your sin. The chalice and host are depicted on the pulpit fall because in this meal, you receive Jesus' true body and blood for the forgiveness of sin, which is also the subject of our preaching! The sacrifice of Christ is the subject of our preaching, never deviating away from apostolic preaching. It's like St. Paul says, "And I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Lastly, we see the crown of thorns on the lectern fall. The crown of thorns has the letters 'IHC' in the middle, which is a Greek abbreviation for the name 'Jesus.' From the lectern, we hear the Scripture which tells of a suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22) and we hear of that pain, suffering, and death coming to fruition at the crucifixion as He was mocked, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. The pastor's stole also has the 'IHC' abbreviation, with a pattern of thorns. The stole teaches similar things as the lectern fall, but there is a flower amid the thorns. This reminds us there is hope, beauty, and growth that happens despite suffering.

Jesus has suffered in your place. He's endured earthly and eternal punishment for *you*.

The symbols on our paraments and vestments lead us into deep contrition for our sin, receiving the sacrifice of Christ in Word and Sacrament, being sanctified (made holy) by the Holy Spirit so that we no longer continue to live in our sin, but in the holiness and love of God which transforms us.

Have a happy Lent!

Pastor Ralston