

THE HOLY INNOCENTS



DECEMBER 28, 2025

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (LCMS)

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AS WE GATHER- THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS-“A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children” (Jer. 31:15). Herod rages and sends to kill all boys two years and younger (Matt. 2:16), desperate to destroy the newborn King of kings. The Church remembers these innocent victims as martyrs. They died for the One who came to die for them. This dark commemoration bears witness to the cruelty of sinful men and the world’s hatred of Christ, who has sanctified our fragile life even from His conception and birth. But the boy who escaped Bethlehem’s bloody streets unscathed went on to face thorns, nails and spear for them and for us. He is the Lamb whose name is written with the Father’s name on the foreheads of His baptized saints (Rev. 14:1). By His death, He has redeemed an inheritance for Himself and brought peace at last by His blood. On the fourth day of Christmas, we sing “a new song” of the Lamb, of Christ the true martyr, whose death testifies that our redemption is won. We “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev. 14:3, 4), for He will bring our tears to an end.

DIVINE SERVICE SETTING IV P. 203-212

OPENING HYMN “THE STAR PROCLAIMS THE KING IS HERE” 399

✠ CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION ✠ P. 203

✠ THE SERVICE OF THE WORD ✠

INTROIT PSALM 31:1,3,5; ANTIPHON: REVELATION 7:14B

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame;

in your righteousness deliver me.

For you are my rock and my fortress;

and for your name’s sake you lead me and guide me.

Into your hand I commit my spirit;

you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning,

is now, and will be forever. Amen.

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, the martyred innocents of Bethlehem showed forth Your praise not by speaking but by dying. Put to death in us all that is in conflict with Your will that our lives may bear witness to the faith we profess with our lips; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT

JEREMIAH 31:15-17

¹⁵Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." ¹⁶Thus says the Lord: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country."

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL

PSALM 71:4A, 5A, 6A,B, 8

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked. For you, O Lord, are my hope. Upon you have I leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.

EPISTLE

REVELATION 14:1-5

¹Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four

living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA AND VERSE

P. 205

HOLY GOSPEL

MATTHEW 2:13-18

P The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the second chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹³When [the wise men] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

NICENE CREED

P. 206

HYMN OF THE DAY "LET ALL TOGETHER PRAISE OUR GOD" **389**

SERMON

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

P Lord, in your Mercy, **C** Hear our Prayer

In Our Prayers:

+ Scott Christenson	+ Tracy Albers
+ Adam Barlau	+ Melanie Schoenfeld
+ Dan Gueningsman	+ Karen Strei
+ Maya Radtke	+ Evelyn Dial
+ Jeremy Radtke	+ Angela Litzau
+ Darian Litzau	+ Hillard Klaustermeier
+ Call Process for Associate Pastor	

OFFERING/OFFERING PRAYER**✠ SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT ✠ P. 208-210**

The Sacrament is celebrated at this congregation in the confession and glad confidence that our Lord, as He says, gives not only bread and wine, but His true body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, to repentant, reconciled believers in Christ. Our Lord Jesus invites to His table those who trust His words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as He forgives and loves us (Matt. 26:26-28; 1Cor. 11:23-29; Matt.6:15).

We practice closed communion. Why? (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Because our Lord says those who eat and drink His body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm. If not yet instructed, in doubt, or holding a confession differing from that of the LCMS, you are lovingly asked not to commune at this time. Pastor is happy to make an appointment to discuss adult catechesis or questions you have regarding the Sacrament of the Altar.

Examination Questions: Please prepare by asking yourself — Am I sorry for my sins? Do I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior from sin? Do I believe that I am receiving the body and blood of Christ along with the bread and wine? Will I try, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live a more God-pleasing life?

Prayers for “Before communing” and “Thanksgiving after receiving the Sacrament” are printed on the front cover of the hymnal.

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

“THE INFANT PRIEST WAS HOLY BORN”	624
“LET THE EARTH NOW PRAISE THE LORD”	352
“WHAT CHILD IS THIS”	370

NUNC DIMITTIS**P. 211**

CLOSING HYMN "BY ALL YOUR SAINTS IN WARFARE" vs. 1,9,3 517

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Attendance Last Week

Sunday: 152

Sunday School/Youth: N/A

Bible Study: N/A

Organist:

Lynn Mueller

Scripture Reader:

Jeff Engen

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS**1. NO SUNDAY SCHOOL OR ADULT BIBLE STUDY TODAY**December 28th.

2. POINSETTIAS- Thank you to everyone that ordered poinsettias to decorate the church this Christmas. Please take home your poinsettia any time.

3. HONORING DCE ELLIE- Our church family would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to **DCE Ellie** as she concludes her **dedicated service** to our congregation. Ellie has blessed us with her leadership, faith, and compassion—especially through her work with our youth, families, and ministries. Her commitment to sharing Christ's love has made a lasting impact on our church and on the many lives she has touched. As Ellie begins a new chapter, we pray for God's guidance and abundant blessings over her future endeavors. We invite the congregation to join us in thanking her for her service and celebrating the meaningful ministry she has shared with us. **Please join us for refreshments and cake between services TODAY December 28th.**

4. LWML- All women are invited to attend the LWML meeting on Monday, January 5th at 6:30pm in the fellowship hall. Pastor will lead Bible study and the meeting will follow. Mites (change) and a monetary monthly offering will be collected.

5. BABY SHOWER: Join the Board of Education on Sunday, January 11th 11:30am-1pm in fellowship hall to celebrate parents-to-be Ellie and Ben and soon-to-be sister Jane who are expecting twins (a boy and a girl). A light lunch will be served. Items needed: all sizes boy clothing, bottles, diapers or gift cards for diapers. A gift registry is available on Amazon (scan the QR code on the invitation posted in the education wing or email tracy.peterson4@yahoo.com for the link).

6. ANNUAL REPORT deadline for the 2025 report is Thursday, January 8th.

7. ANNUAL MEETING-All communicant members of legal voting age are encouraged to attend the Annual Voters Meeting on Thursday, January 22 at 7:00 PM.

8. HYGIENE KITS- LWML will be collecting items for these kits through Christmas. They will be assembled and sent to Orphan Grain Train. The tree is located in the lower narthex. Take a tag from the tree and bring item(s) (unwrapped) and place in the bin under the table. You can bring as many items as you would like from one tag. Monetary donations can be placed in the can. Do not bring items not on the tags. Orphan Grain Train is very specific in what they can use. Thank you for sharing what you have with those who have nothing.

9. NEW MEMBER-Are you (or someone you know) an Adult interested in becoming a member at St. Paul? If so, please contact Pastor Barlau at 612-394-6224 or email him at pastorbarlau@gmail.com to discuss Adult Instruction classes. Pastor is willing to work with your schedule to do individual or possibly group setting classes.

9. SCHEDULE- January 4: Ushers: 1st Service- Adam Birkholz, Todd Ruschmeyer, Jacob Ross, Fred Holasek; 2nd Service: Mike Lee, Gary Kosek, Ben Schulteis, Mavrik Kosek; Acolytes: 1st Service- T. Parpart, L. Schauer; 2nd Service: B. Mike, J. Barlau; Greeters- 1st Service: Gaylen & Bonnie Schoenfeld; 2nd Service: Craig & Tracy Jackson; Scripture Reader: Dave Wroge; Flowers: Audrey Litzau; Altar Guild: Jen Bebo and Beth Foust; Worship Bags: Elaine Peterson

Calendar of Events

Sun. Dec. 28	8:00 a.m. Between services 10:30 a.m.	WORSHIP WITH CONT. LINE COMM. Farewell reception for DCE Ellie and Family WORSHIP WITH CONT. LINE COMM.
Tues. Dec 30	7:30 PM	Dartball Home vs. Mayer
Wed. Dec 31	Noon	Deadline for Bulletin
Thurs. Jan 1		Church offices closed
Sun. Jan 4	8:00 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION No Sunday School/Adult Bible Study

KIDS IN THE DIVINE SERVICE



What is The Festival of the Holy Innocents?

The Festival of the Holy Innocents is the day that we remember the children that were murdered at Bethlehem. These children are considered by some to be the first Christian martyrs. The word martyr (pronounced MAR-ter) comes from a Greek word which means "witness."



What is the whole story of the Holy Innocents?

We learn in Matt. 2:1-18 that King Herod didn't like the idea that a new King was born. He thought that if he killed baby Jesus, his worries would be gone. So he gave orders to have all of the boys in Bethlehem two years and under killed. Herod's soldiers marched into Bethlehem and did just that! But Herod and his soldiers didn't know that an angel had told Joseph in a dream to take Jesus and Mary and escape. When the soldiers stormed Bethlehem, baby Jesus was safe and sound on his way to Egypt. If you think about it, Jesus was saved from death as a baby so that He could die for us a man. What a great and glorious God we have! He keeps His promises!



Parents: Before or after the Divine Service, discuss the meaning of the word martyr. At home, read the story of the Holy Innocents. Be sure to give them examples of other martyrs by reading their stories in Scripture. For example, read the story of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7.



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