



Welcome to Pax Vobis!

Welcome to Pax Vobis ("Peace be with you" in Latin). This newsletter will be my periodic thoughts on Missio Dei Church's everyday liturgy (work of the people in Latin). The content here will encompass more than just our corporate gatherings on Sunday mornings, but how our faith in Jesus Christ encompasses our every day life.

I know when some of you hear the word "liturgy" you start breaking out into hives, so let me explain what liturgy really means. With its roots in λειτουργία (leitourgia), liturgy means "public work" or "public servant." In other words, all that we do, think, say before others... others in our homes, in our places of work, in our communities... we humbly offer that this is our liturgy, our public service, before people, and before our all encompassing God. In no way is liturgy to mean rote, empty ritual, but rather

...liturgy is a school where through sign and symbol, word and music, our minds and hearts are formed to be in union with the movement of God, with God Himself. ~ Fr. M. Basil Pennington

Liturgy is our daily, vibrant movement with God Himself through the reading, memorization, and meditating on Scripture, the singing of hymns, through the cup and the bread. Liturgy is our pressing into the heart of God and moving with Him. Days, wild and crazy days of family life, need order, scaffolding, sacred rhythms. If we say God is at the center, so we order the tangle of our days around Him: we commune with Him through the liturgical, sacred everyday rhythms of our public work, our daily service, our vocation. And He untangles us.

My prayer is that *Pax Vobis* will be the place where we are stretched in how we think about and live out our everyday worship/service to Jesus Christ, the one who has redeemed us.

Peace be with you...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Vroom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Moving Too Quickly

This week, I had a conversation with a friend who made an observation about our corporate gathering. Whenever I have these conversations where our corporate worship gatherings are critiqued, I always get a little defensive as it is about our family and how we approach God. However, what he noticed is something that I had been seeing as well. He shared with me that throughout the worship service people were deeply moved at different times, but there was one time where we both noticed that people really disengaged. Can you guess when it was? It was after people had received communion.



I noticed it too. There are the much needed bathroom breaks, some headed out to pick up their children, conversations were had in the back of the worship area, etc. At times, I am doing this as well. I, too, have chatted it up in the back with some of you who just want to hear about my week or throw me a gracious bone after the sermon. I have looked to the Kids Crossing doors for my own children who sometimes come in like a pack of Well, let's just cut to the chase, I am not exempt from being distracted after receiving communion.

As I have sat in this for awhile, I find myself wondering what this means personally and corporately when we quickly move from participating in communion to activity? What are we missing? Do we really understand the weightiness of communion or has it become just another thing that we do when we get together?

So, I did some re-reading. I read through [Luke 22](#) and [1 Corinthians 11](#) as Jesus (and St. Paul) shares a final meal with his disciples. I hear Christ's voice echo out in [John 6:35](#) when he says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." This is only one of several places in Scripture where Christ is said to nourish us and we are said to feed on him. At the Last Supper Christ instituted the sacrament as a visible reminder of this nourishment and as a means by which to communicate his grace to us. Even the historic [The Heidelberg Catechism](#) puts it beautifully.

He intends to teach us that as bread and wine nourish this temporal life, so too his crucified body and shed blood truly nourish our souls for eternal life. But more important, he intends to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the work of the Holy Spirit, share in his true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in his remembrance...

Christ is spiritually present in a special way as we partake in communion. If we truly take Jesus at his word when he says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" ([Matthew 18:20](#)), we can say that "we meet him at *his* table to which he comes to give himself to us."¹ This should transform how we prepare for, participate in and leave *his* table. As we are nourished by Christ through His Word and the sacrament, each of us needs to make every attempt to fight this pressure to move on to the next thing on the day's agenda.

So here's my challenge: In the upcoming weeks to come after receiving communion, I want challenge us all to be still so that we don't miss a moment or a morsel of His nourishment. Think about these things:

- Christ is present with us in a special way as we gather and participate in communion.
- Consider the great loving price that was paid for our sins (past, present and future).

¹ Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: an Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994, p. 995.

- Reflect on the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit who is working deeply within us to make us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.
- Ask God to give us lives of worship that are unhurried by life, but sensitive to his ongoing presence.
- And finally, remain and sing with your brothers and sisters to God about the beauty of the Gospel.

Rolling out the Red Carpets: Opening Our Homes

Easter is coming up very soon! I have described Easter as one of the Super Bowl Sundays for me. I would not miss it for anything! Pastors plan their messages for weeks just to make sure that on that particular Sunday people will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The average church attender/member looks to the church to be the place that we can direct unbelievers to hear the Gospel.

But does it stop there? I know it generally does for our home. We get all dolled up in our Easter attire (new clothes... pastels once a year), go to church praying that God will do something powerful in the next 90 minutes, and then head on over to celebrate with our family.

Don't get me wrong now... I love gathering with my wife's family who is a bustle of love and activity and great food. Around the room we hear a short pre-dinner devotional and share then are challenged to share what the resurrection means to us.

I wonder what it would look like this year if we looked around for the next eleven days and start inviting friends and neighbors, coworkers and strangers, the young and the elderly to our homes for a meal. What if we start opening our homes to a lost, broken, and lonely world to exhibit the beauty of the Gospel? Imagine what would happen if we, the people of God, on Resurrection Sunday would extend a gracious and loving invitation to the world around us by rolling out the red carpets?

Who is up for the challenge?

