

Lutheran Church of Australia: Commission on Worship

STATEMENT 3

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RITES OF BLESSING AND RITES OF CONSECRATION

Adopted by the Department of Liturgics, June 1988. The Department prepared this statement to clarify its thinking and provide guidelines as it produced rites of blessing and consecration.

Reformatted and revised: 8 May 1998

- 1 Both blessing and holiness derive from God and belong to God.
- 2 Both are communicated by God through his word and Holy Spirit.
- 3 While God is inherently holy in that holiness characterises his being, he is blessed in that he blesses and is therefore the source of blessing.
- 4 Whatever is blessed receives blessing from God, but whatever is consecrated shares in God's holiness by contact with him.
- 5 Blessing is the divinely given power for life, security, fertility, prosperity, and fulfilment in plants, animals, and human beings, which is normally communicated through right order in the natural world and through right relationships in the social world. Land with its produce, houses with their contents, and work places with their tools can therefore be blessed as instruments of blessing.
- 6 Holiness is a supernatural status, ascribed by God to certain chosen persons and things, and a supernatural state of being, derived by them from union with Christ and contact with him. Christians are therefore holy in Christ.
- 7 While people are blessed if they experience fulfilment and success in this early life, those who are holy (saints) live heavenly lives with the angels even here on earth and experience the powers of the age to come already in this age.
- 8 While blessing belongs to the profane, earthly realm and the providence of God, ie Luther's kingdom of the left hand, holiness belongs to the heavenly realm and the gift of God's gracious presence in worship, ie Luther's kingdom of the right hand.
- 9 While all those who live according to the order of creation receive God's blessing, only the righteous who have been purified by baptism and faith in Christ share in God's holiness through the means of grace in worship.
- 10 Just as a person who defies the order of creation loses God's blessing, so the believer who defies God loses his holiness.

- 11 While the purpose of blessing is to promote the conditions for life and peace (shalom), the purpose of consecration is to set apart people and things for public worship and its performance, so that they can mediate contact with God and his grace.
- 12 God communicates his blessing to people through:
 - his creative word in the order of creation and in those who are called to uphold that order, such as parents and rulers
 - his promises to certain persons, such as Abraham, who in turn mediate that blessing to others through personal contact and performative speech
 - his presence in worship, where Christ's servants bless his people in his name.
- 13 The chief features of rites of blessing are the proclamation of God's promise of blessing, prayer for blessing, and the performative declaration of divine blessing in the name of the Triune God together with appropriate gesture.
- 14 The Triune God communicates his holiness to his faithful people, by contact with the holy things in worship, through:
 - his holy name, by which his presence is invoked
 - his word, which sanctifies what it has purified
 - the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - the body and blood of Jesus, which bring people into the heavenly sanctuary.
- 15 The chief features of rites of consecration are the proclamation of God's word which institutes and authorises them, and the invocation of the Triune God in prayer.
- 16 We use the term 'blessing' for those rites which support institutions, places, people and things in the fulfilment of their God-given vocation.
- 17 Since the term 'dedication' has largely lost its sacral sense in modern English and can mean commitment to anything, we use the term 'consecration' for those rites which set apart people and things for divine worship.