



Rev. Justin Panzer, District President

President's Office

February Devotion

Your doctor says you are a magnificent physical specimen. Later, you climb some stairs, clutch your chest, and are rushed to the hospital. The ER physician tells you your arteries are so clogged you were only one jelly donut away from the grim reaper. You ask the doctor, “Why didn’t you tell me I was in worse shape than the Pillsbury Doughboy?”

He confesses, “I don’t like telling people depressing news.”

By and large, we want the truth. Or do we? The season of Lent begins this month with a heightened emphasis on the devastation of our spiritual sickness of sin, confronting us with the truth. The Father is so pleased with His Son because He is the embodiment of truth and love. **He wants us all to have transfigured lives of the reality that Jesus offers. We need to listen to Him, about everything.**

Our capacity for self-deception has no limits. The prophet Obadiah writes, “The pride of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 3). The truth is pretty bad, which is damnation. However, the truth is also pretty terrific, which is no damnation. Remember this when ashes are placed on your forehead on Ash Wednesday. **Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, only in Jesus you have life. Put your listening ears on.**

Just like the previous years, we invite the people of the LCMS Kansas District to join together on Ash Wednesday for a District-wide “**Day of Repentance.**” We encourage you to pray the Litany, worship, fast and give a financial contribution to your local congregation.

What is a fast? How does it fit with what the Lord is trying to teach us as He calls us to repentance? If you have access to *The Lutheran Study Bible*, turn to page 189, where you will find a helpful article titled, “When You Fast” (also available online on the *First Things* blog, firstthings.com/blogs; type “When You Fast” in the search bar.)

Note especially these words:

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke against fasting as a means of salvation. Instead, He commended fasting as a private, voluntary act of humility before God (Mt. 6:16-18). Take a few moments now to read His words and reflect on your own devotion. If you are like most people, you have thought more about dieting than fasting. It is hard to imagine a daylong fast. No doubt fasting for 40 days like Jesus did after His Baptism is out of the question. Yet our Lord’s words clearly reveal that fasting should be part of a Christian’s life: He said, “When you fast” (Mt. 6:16), not “If you fast” (cf. Mt. 9:14-15). The early Christians fasted (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). Why shouldn’t a twenty-first century Christian do likewise?

A simple fast might involve going without one or two meals before receiving the Lord’s Supper and using the time to focus on God’s Word. If skipping a meal isn’t an option, think about taking a break from something else, like social media or web surfing. Whatever form it takes, fasting is a powerful reminder of Christ’s own obedience and sacrifice for us all.

Our Lord wants you to return to Him what is His in the first place. Everything belongs to the Lord, we only get to borrow it from time to time. In the same way, everything we give back to Him belongs to Him; it was never ours to begin with.

“Return to me” (Joel 2:12). Through His prophet Joel, the Lord invites you to return to Him with your whole life. **God bless our worship of Him, especially during the season of Lent!**

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