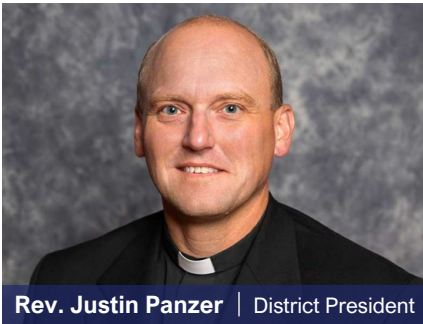


PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President



"And he [Jesus] said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' "

(Luke 23:43)

These Last Sundays of the Church Year call us to reexamine ourselves. We have no clue when Christ will come again. Yes, there are signs pointing to His return, but as to an exact date, it is foolish for us to speculate.

While we do not know the exact time and date of Christ's return, we do know the ending to that story. God's promises will be fulfilled on the day of the final resurrection. One day Jesus will come back. Everything will come to an end. One second, we're eating a meal or driving a car or at work, and the next instant we will see Jesus in all His glory.

By faith, we know that on the Last Day those who have died will have their physical bodies rise and live again. On the Judgment Day, those who have believed in Christ as their Lord and Savior from sin will enter the glorious heavenly life forever, with body and soul reunited.

It's in Luke's Gospel where we read that just one criminal speaks against Jesus—and you can hear

the contempt in his voice. He is defiant, angry, and sarcastic as he joins in with the mocking. But, in the midst of mockery, there is hope. It is hope found in the sudden reversal of the one criminal who receives paradise. The criminal is broken and asks for Jesus to remember him. He sees himself as the lost and condemned man he truly is.

Jesus answers the criminal's request by announcing the one true story for all to believe.

"Today you will be with me in paradise" (v. 43). Today—right now. What a glorious word for you and me! There is no such thing as a Roman Catholic purgatory or interim state that believers will end up hoping for others to purchase the rest of their eternal salvation. Where is the hope in that? Where is Christ? It makes His death completely insufficient.

God sent His Son Jesus to be the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for our sins—past, present and future. **Hebrews 9:27-28**, *"Just as*

it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."

Jesus came into this world to save sinners who are helpless, lost, and condemned. There are no exceptions—all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Christ really matters. He is the only way to salvation. He has transferred us from the domain of darkness into His Kingdom of light. This is why we are faithful in every Sunday worship to hear his Word and receive His Sacrament, to be daily in devotion and prayer, and to be those spiritual priests who are reaching out to the lapsed and the lost, who are not yet known to Christ. Come soon, Lord Jesus!