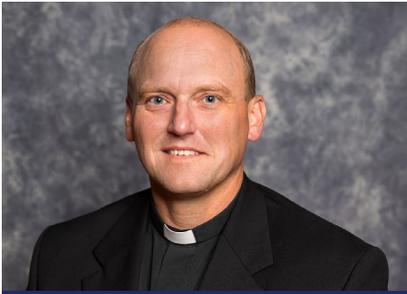


# MONTLY DEVOTIONS



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President

A graphic for the February Devotion featuring a snowy landscape with a path leading towards a bright light on the horizon. The text "February Devotion" is overlaid in a large, dark blue, sans-serif font.

## February Devotion

**“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”**

**Joel 2:12**

Return to the Lord your God” (v. 13). God’s Word penetrates deeply into hearts and consciences, producing genuine outward signs: fasting, weeping and mourning. He shatters the core of our self-idolatry. The Lord summons His wayward people home through His living Word. Let the Holy Law humble your arrogance, driving you to true contrition, even if it wounds your broken heart. Authentic repentance recoils at sin, for sin severs us from the Lord.

When Joel proclaims God’s Word, he reveals a compassionate Savior: “He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (v. 13). This is God’s self-description — jealous for His covenant people, yet overflowing with steadfast love, unwilling that any should perish eternally (cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

On Ash Wednesday, the mark of ashes and the sign of the cross are imposed on our foreheads. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). They remind us of our mortality and why we desperately need a Savior — to deliver us from this present evil age and from sin’s

curse, and to grant eternal life and light in His presence. Through the cross, God sent His only Son to redeem all. The blessings of Christ’s death and resurrection — forgiveness, life, salvation — are bestowed as pure gifts through faith, created by the Holy Spirit.

I invite the people of the LCMS Kansas District to unite once more on Ash Wednesday in a district-wide “Day of Repentance.” Join in praying the Litany, worshiping together and offering a financial contribution to your congregation. These acts flow from repentant hearts, returning to God what is already His.

What is fasting, and how does it align with the Lord’s call to repentance? If you have *The Lutheran Study Bible*, turn to page 189 for the insightful article “When You Fast” (also online at <https://firstthings.com/when-you-fast>). It highlights these key 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 (Matt. 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” (Matt. 6:16), not “If you fast” (cf Matt. 9:14–15). The early Christians fasted (Acts 13:2–3; 14:23). Why shouldn’t a twenty-first-century Christian do likewise?**

Our Lord urges you to return what is His from the start. We merely steward His gifts temporarily. All we “give back” was never truly ours. “Return to me,” the Lord beckons through Joel (2:12) — with your entire life: heart, soul, strength and possessions. **God bless our worship of Him, especially in this Lenten season of reflection and renewal!**

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