

**QUINQUAGESIMA
(PRE-LENT 3)
THE SUNDAY BEFORE ASH
WEDNESDAY**

Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Mrs. Kristen Lawson, Organist

WELCOME IN THE NAME OF OUR BLESSED LORD! We are pleased you are here, gathered around the Gospel in Preaching and the Sacraments! **GUESTS** – If we can assist you in any way with questions about our confession of faith, spiritual struggles, understanding our liturgical service, or any other need, please let us know. It is our prayer that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will strengthen and comfort you.

CONFESSIOAL STATEMENT: Concordia Lutheran Church confesses all the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired word of God without any errors. We also hold, without any reservation, to the teachings of the Evangelical-Lutheran Confessions contained in the 1580 Book of Concord. We confess these teachings to be the correct interpretation of Scripture and a true explanation of the one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic faith.

PASTORAL CARE AND GUESTS AT THE LORD'S SUPPER: Scripture and our Confessions teach that the Lord's Supper "is the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine" (Small Catechism). We are concerned about the spiritual welfare of all who commune at the Lord's Table. *If you are a guest and desire to commune, please speak to the pastor before the service.* Our altar is open to those who confess oneness with us in doctrine, are members of sister churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and are not under church discipline in another congregation. In Christ, Pastor Lawson

MARCH 2, 2025 † 9:00 A. M.

† In the Name of Jesus †

Prayer before Worship: Lord God, heavenly Father, by Your Son, Jesus Christ, You mercifully opened the eyes of the blind man and granted Him to see the light: we poor sinners beseech You to enlighten our hearts by Your Holy Word, that through Christ, Your Son, who died on the cross for us and made atonement for our sins, we may rightly learn to know Your gracious help and mercy and in all troubles and trials look only to that, seeking it by faithful prayer, and so find comfort and deliverance from the devil, sin, and death, and obtain salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Divine Service: Rite Two
Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary: p. 60

The Office of Preparation
(Confession of Sin & Holy Absolution)

Hymn of Invocation: 33, *We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost*

C: We now implore the Holy Ghost

**For the true faith, which we need the most,
That in our last moments He may befriend us
And, as homeward we journey, attend us. Lord, have mercy.**

**Shine in our hearts, O most precious Light,
That we Jesus Christ may know aright,
Clinging to our Savior, whose blood hath bought us.
Who again to our homeland hath brought us. Lord, have mercy.**

**Thou sacred Love, grace on us bestow,
Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow
That with hearts united we love each other,
Of one mind, in peace with every brother. Lord, have mercy!**

**Thou highest Comfort in every need,
Grant that neither shame nor death we heed,
That e'en then our courage may never fail us
When the Foe shall accuse and assail us. Lord, have mercy!**

*At the Invocation and Absolution all **may** make the sign of the †
in remembrance of their Baptism.*

The Invocation: p. 60-61

P: In the Name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

The Confession of Sin (form I): pp. 60-62

P: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God, our Father, beseech Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

C: Who made heaven and earth.

P: I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;

C: And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

C: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

P: I ask each of you, in the presence of God who searches the heart: Do you confess that you have sinned, and do you repent of your sins?

C: I do.

P: Do you believe that Jesus Christ has redeemed you from all your sins, and do you desire forgiveness in His name?

C: I do.

P: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

May He comfort your heart by His holy Absolution,
and strengthen you by His Sacraments,
that your joy may be full.

Peace be with you!

C: Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Introit

Tone 4



Antiphon (**Pastor**) Be my `rock of refuge,/ a fortress of de`fense to save me.
For You are my rock `and my fortress./ Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead `me and guide me.

Psalm (**All**) In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me nev`er be ashamed;/ deliver me in `Your righteousness.

Into Your hand I com`mit my spirit;/ You have redeemed me, O Lord `God of *truth*.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I `am in trouble;/ my eye wastes `away with grief.

Make Your face shine u`pon Your servant;/ save me for `Your mercies' sake.

Gloria Patri (**All**) Glory be to the Father `and to the Son:/ and to `the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the be`ginning, is now:/ and ever shall be, forever`more. Amen.

Antiphon (**All**) Be my `rock of refuge,/ a fortress of de`fense to save me.

For You are my rock `and my fortress./ Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead `me and guide me.

Kyrie

**C: Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

Gloria in Excelsis

P: Glory be to God on high:

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

**We praise You, we bless You, we worship You,
we glorify You, we give thanks to You, for Your great glory.**

O Lord God, heav'nly King,

God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

You take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

You take away the sin of the world, receive our prayer.

You are seated at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For You only are holy. You only are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Salutation

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

Collect for the Day

P: O Lord, we beseech You, mercifully hear our prayers, and having set us free from the bonds of sin, defend us from all evil; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

Old Testament: *Isaiah 35:3-7*

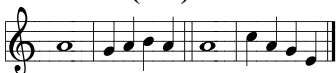
P: *In those days Isaiah prophesied:* Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gradual (All)

Tone 4



You are the God `who does wonders;/ You have declared Your strength a`mong the peoples.

You have with Your arm re`deemed Your people,/ The sons of Ja`cob and Joseph.

Chief Hymn: 238, *Lord Jesus Christ, True Man and God, sts. 1-7 (tune: 291)*

**C: Lord Jesus Christ, true Man and God, Who borest anguish, scorn, the rod,
And diedst at last upon the tree, To gain Thy Father’s grace for me:**

**I pray Thee, through that bitter woe, Let me, a sinner, mercy know
When comes the hour of failing breath And I must wrestle, Lord, with death.**

**When from my sight all fades away, And when my tongue no more can say,
And when mine ears no more can hear, And when my heart is racked with fear,**

**When all my mind is darkened o'er, And human help can do no more;
Then come, Lord, Jesus, come with speed, And help me in the hour of need.**

**Lead me from this dark vale beneath, And shorten then the pangs of death;
All evil spirits drive away, But let Thy Spirit with my stay,**

**Until my soul the body leave; Then in Thy hands my soul receive,
And let the earth the body keep, Till the last day shall break its sleep.**

**Joyful my resurrection be, Thou in the Judgment plead for me,
And hide my sins, Lord, from Thy face, and give me life of Thy dear grace!**

Epistle: *1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

P: Brethren: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

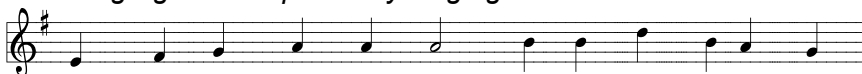
P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Tract (**Pastor**) *replaces the Alleluia Verse until Easter*

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness;
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving. Know that the Lord, He is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His
pasture.

The congregation responds by singing:



Christ has hum-bled Him-self, and be-come o-be-dient



un-to death; ev'n the death of the Cross.

Holy Gospel: *St. Luke 18:31-43*

P: The Holy Gospel according to † St. Luke, the 18th chapter:

C: **Glory be to You, O Lord.**

P: *At that time* [Jesus] took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken. Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

P: This is the † Holy Gospel.

C: **Praise be to You, O Christ.**

*At the words “And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
And was made man” all may bow out of reverence for Christ’s Incarnation.*

Nicene Creed

C: **I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,**

Maker of heaven and earth

and of all things visible and invisible.

**And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
Very God of Very God,
Begotten, not made,
Being of one substance with the Father,
By Whom all things were made;
Who for us men and for our salvation
came down from heaven
*and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
and was made man;*
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried;
and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
And He shall come again with glory
to judge both the living and the dead;
Whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped
and glorified,
Who spoke by the Prophets.
And I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
And I look for the Resurrection of the dead
and the Life † of the world to come. Amen.**

Chief Hymn: 238, *Lord Jesus Christ, True Man and God*, sts. 8-12 (tune: 291)

**C: Implicitly, I trust Thee, Lord, For Thou hast promised in Thy Word:
“In truth I tell you, who receives My Word, and keeps it, and believes,
Shall never fall God’s wrath beneath, Shall never taste eternal death;
Though here he must return to dust, He still is noways therefore lost;
For I will with a mighty hand Deliver him from death’s strong band,**

**And lift him hence that he shall be Forever in My realm with Me,
Forever living there in bliss." O let us not that glory miss!
Dear Lord, forgive us all our guilt, Help us to wait until Thou wilt
That we depart; and let our faith Be brave, and conquer e'en in death,
Firm resting in Thy sacred Word, Until we sleep in Thee, our Lord.**

Sermon

Offertory: pp. 70-71

**C: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit.
Amen.**

The Intercessions: *each petition concludes:* Lord, in Your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**
Hymn of Preparation: 331, *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*, sts. 1-3, 9-10

**C: A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, The guilt of all men bearing;
And laden with the sins of earth, None else the burden sharing!
Goes patient on, grow weak and faint, To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer; Bears shame and stripes, and wounds and death,
Anguish and mockery, and saith, "Willing all this I suffer."**

**This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great Friend, The Lamb of God, our Savior;
Him God the Father chose to send To gain for us His favor.
"Go forth, My Son," the Father saith, "And free men from the fear of death,
From guilt and condemnation. The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by Thy Passion men shall share The fruit of Thy salvation."**

**"Yea, Father, yea, most willingly I'll bear what Thou commandest;
My will conforms to Thy decree, I do what Thou demandest."
O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done! The Father offers up His Son!
The Son, content, descendeth! O Love, how strong Thou art to save!
Thou beddest Him within the grave Whose word the mountains rendeth.**

**Of death I am no more afraid, New life from Thee is flowing;
Thy cross affords me cooling shade When day's hot sun is glowing.
When by my grief I am oppressed, On Thee my weary soul shall rest
And o'er grief's ills so conquer. And when beneath life's stormy woe**

My ship is driven to and fro, So art Thou then my Anchor.

**And when Thy glory I shall see And taste Thy kingdom's pleasure,
Thy blood my royal robe shall be, My joy beyond all measure;
When I appear before Thy throne, Thy righteousness shall be my crown,
With these I need not hide me. And there, in garments richly wrought
As Thine own bride, I shall be brought To stand in joy beside Thee.**

The Liturgy of the Holy Communion

Preface

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And with your spirit.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

Proper Preface & Sanctus

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who, having created all things, took on human flesh and born of the virgin Mary. For our sake He died on the cross and rose from the dead to put an end to death, thus fulfilling Your will and gaining for You a holy people. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

C: **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;**

Heav'n and earth are full of Your glory.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

**Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He
who come in the name of the Lord.**

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

Lord's Prayer: pp. 77-78

P: Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed by Thy name;

Thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
† but deliver us from evil;

C: For Thine is the kingdom and the pow'r and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Words of Institution: pp. 78-79

*When the Pastor turns and elevates the Host and Cup, the congregation **may** bow as an act of reverent worship toward the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.*

Pax Domini (The Peace of the Lord): p. 79

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

Agnus Dei: pp. 79-80

**C: O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,
grant us Your peace. Amen.**

Distribution of the Holy Communion

*Prayers for “**Before Holy Communion**” and
for “**After Holy Communion**” are found on page 40 in ELH.*

The Nunc Dimittis: pp. 81-82

**C: Lord, now You let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word.
For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face
of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people
Israel.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.**

Collect of Thanksgiving: pp. 82-83

P: O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.

C: And His mercy endures forever.

P: O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in lovingkindness sent Your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

The Salutation: p. 84

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

The Benedicamus: p. 84

P: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Benediction: p. 84

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.

C: Amen. Amen. Amen.

Dismissal Hymn: 179, *Jesus Loves Me*

**C: Jesus loves me! This I know, For the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to Him belong; They are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

**Jesus loves me! See His grace! On the cross He took my place.
There He suffered and He died, That I might be glorified.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

**Jesus loves me! God's own Son Over sin the vict'ry son.
When I die, saved by His grace, I shall see Him face to face.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

Jesus loves me! He is near. He is with His Church so dear.

**And the Spirit He has sent By His Word and Sacrament.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

Our Life Together

Quinquagesima means “50 Days.” *Quinqua* = 50; *gesima* = Days.

There are now approximately 50 Days before Easter.

Alleluias are silent until Easter Sunday. This is the first small step taken to remind us that we are now making the turn toward Lent and a season of intentional discipline and repentance. Lent will last for six weeks culminating with Good Friday. Let us prepare to observe the holy season.

God’s Abiding Blessings to Abigail, Isaac, and Rosemary Cushman who will be baptized into Christ today at Bethany. May the Lord keep them in His care and *grant that they grow in grace each by holy baptism that they may eternal life inherit!* (hymn 241). Their parents, Samuel and Cassandra are currently going through Adult Catechesis toward the goal of attending the Lord’s Supper in our church.



Ash Wednesday Divine Service: Christians begin Holy Lent by attending the Divine Service with (optional) Imposition of Ashes. To begin the Service, ashes are placed on the forehead in the shape of a cross. For we are subject to the results of our sin: Dust you are and to dust you shall return. But by His cross Christ has redeemed us for the resurrection unto life. **4pm at Concordia; 6pm at Bethany.**

Midweek Lenten Vespers start a week from Wednesday at 6pm. The theme this year is *Our Ordinary Lenten Exodus*. We will learn how the story of God's rescue of Israel from slavery in Egypt is connected with Jesus' rescue of us from our slavery to sin and death, and how that great rescue is presented to us in the five *ordinary* songs of the liturgy: the Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Creed, Sanctus, Agnus Dei. Each week we prepare for Holy Week & Easter by meditating on one of these great songs in connection with a lesson from Exodus and portion of the Passion from St. Mark. Resolve to attend Service each Sunday and midweek in Lent to receive Christ’s gifts.

Daily Devotion: Lent is a time for deliberate spiritual growth. It is a perfect time to either begin or improve the habit of spending time each day in God's Word and prayer. If you don't follow another pattern, the psalms, lessons and Book of Concord readings on our weekly prayer sheet are a simple way to meditate on the Scriptures and to pray. The daily prayers during Lent will focus on the *litanies of the season*. A litany is form of responsive prayer, but can also be used by individuals. Litanies consist of a series of brief petitions followed by a response. The Daily Prayers are posted on the Bethany & Concordia Group Facebook page and also sent out to the parish email list. You are also encouraged to focus on proper preparation for the Lord's Supper by periodically reading through the Small Catechism's *Christian Questions & Answers* (front of the hymnal, pp. 38-39). Saturday evenings or Sunday mornings are a good time for such a healthy practice.

Feasts, Commemorations, and Events

Monday: Pastor at Bethany

Tuesday: Pastor at Concordia; Adult Catechesis, 4:30pm

ASH WEDNESDAY: Concordia Holy Communion, 4pm;
Bethany Holy Communion, 6pm

Thursday: Bible Study at Bethany, 10:00am

Friday: *Comm. of Sts. Perpetua & Felicitas, Martyrs*; Pastor at Bethany

Saturday: Pastor's Day Off

Next Sunday: *Invocabit: First Sunday in Holy Lent*

Concordia Service of the Word, 9:00am

Bethany Holy Communion, 11:00am

Bible Study & Sunday School at Bethany, 12:30pm

Thoughts on the Lenten Journey



With the liturgy of Ash Wednesday, the 40-day Lenten journey begins that will lead us to Holy Week & Easter, the memorial of the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection, which is the heart of the mystery of our salvation.

Holy Lent is an opportune and favorable time in which the Church invites Christians to be more intensely aware of Christ's redeeming work and to live our baptism more profoundly. In fact, in this liturgical period, from the earliest times the People of God nourished itself abundantly on the Word of God to be reinforced in the faith, going over the whole history of creation and redemption.

Since it is 40 days long (not counting the Sundays), Lent vividly recalls some of the events that marked the life and history of ancient Israel. Those events are powerful examples for us. Think, for example, of the 40 days of the universal flood, which ended with the

covenant established by God with Noah and thus with humanity. Think also of the 40 days of Moses' stay on Mount Sinai, which were followed by the gift of the tablets of the Law.

Above all, the Lenten season is an invitation to relive with Jesus the 40 days he spent in the desert, praying and fasting, before undertaking his public mission.

On Ash Wednesday, we also undertake a journey of reflection and prayer with all Christians worldwide to go spiritually to Calvary, meditating on the central mysteries of the faith. In this way, we will prepare ourselves to experience, after the mystery of the Cross, the joy of the Resurrection of Easter.

In many churches (including ours) a sober, solemn and symbolic gesture is carried out to begin Lent: the imposition of ashes. This rite is accompanied by a meaningful formula which constitutes an urgent call to acknowledge ourselves sinners and to return to God: "Remember, O man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return" These words, taken from Genesis 3:19, recall the human condition subjected to corruption and limitation because of sin, and are intended to lead us to place our hope in Christ alone. For Christ, the Savior promised in Genesis 3, is He who has atoned for sin, and by His death has destroyed death and opened unto us the way of everlasting life.

The life of a Christian is a life of faith in Christ, founded on the Word of God and nourished by it. In the trials of life and in each temptation, the secret of victory consists in listening to the Word of truth and rejecting with determination the lie of evil.

This is the authentic and central program of the Lenten Season: to listen to the Word of Truth, to live, speak and do the truth, to reject lies that poison humanity and are the door to all evils. It is urgent, therefore, during these 40 days, to again listen to the Gospel, the Lord's Word, the Word of truth, so that in every Christian, in each one of us, the awareness be reinforced of the truth that He has given us, to live it and be His witnesses.

Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life and in this way to know the fundamental truth: who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life. Thus, the Lenten season offers us a liturgical journey filled with communal and self disciplines. These disciplines help us – all together, and each of us individually – to open our eyes to our weaknesses, and they help us to open our hearts to receive the merciful love of Christ in the gifts that flow from His earthly Life, Passion, Death & Resurrection, and now His glorified, heavenly Life.

In bringing us closer to God, the Lenten journey also allows us to see others and their needs with new eyes. Whoever begins to see God, to contemplate the face of Christ, sees his neighbors with other eyes.

For this reason, Lent, as a time of listening to the truth, is an opportune and favorable moment to be converted to love, since the profound truth – the truth of God – is, at the same time, love, a love that is able to assume the Lord's attitude of compassion and mercy (see, for instance Matthew 9:36: "When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them").

Conscious of her mission in the world, the Church does not cease to proclaim the merciful love of Christ, who continues to direct his compassionate gaze to people of all times.

She does this chiefly in the call to those outside to come out of the life of sin and unbelief and be converted to life in God. Thus, the Church calls to repentance and she dispenses the forgiving, healing, life-giving, life-affirming gifts in the Gospel through Word and Sacrament.



The Church also does not forget the earthly needs of those she calls. Prayer & meditation on God Word, and [perhaps] fasting are disciplines that help us to embrace anew the love of Christ. These two lead to charity as a suitable way to cast the love of Christ outward to the needy.

· PRAY · FAST · GIVE ·

May the 40 days of this Lenten season be days of reflection and intense prayer, in which we let ourselves be guided by the Word of God, which the Sunday liturgies, as well as the special midweek ones, proclaim to us abundantly. May Lent be, moreover, a time of repentance and watchfulness over ourselves, aware that the struggle against sin never ends, as temptation is a daily reality and frailty and illusion are everyone's experience. And may we drink deeply from the bottomless well of God's forgiving mercy, love, kindness and compassion in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Finally, may Lent be a time to do good to others; may it be an occasion to share the gifts received with others, to pay attention to the needs of others. Purified and renewed in mind and spirit by this journey, may we come to the joyous celebration of the great mystery of Christ's Passover from Death to Life on Resurrection Sunday and the great season that follows. May we all be blessed with a good and fruitful Lent.

Hymn of the Week: Paul Eber (1511-1569) was on the inner-circle of the Reformation and was an intimate friend of Philip Melanchthon, who frequently sought his council. Luther, too, placed great confidence in his ability. In 1544 Eber was made professor of Latin at the university, and in 1557 professor of Hebrew and was also appointed court preacher. The following year he was elected general superintendent (bishop) of Saxony. He wrote 17 hymns and was, next to Luther, the greatest of the Wittenberg hymnwriters. A number of his hymns were written for his children to sing to Luther's melodies, and generally his hymns are distinguished for their childlike spirit and beautiful simplicity. One such is today's CHIEF HYMN, *Lord Jesus Christ, True Man and God* (ELH 238). Eber wrote this hymn for his daughters in 1557 and it bore the superscription: "A prayer to Christ for a blessed death." Indeed, the hymn served as a source of comfort to many in their dying hour. It is reported that the German ruler Joachim of Anhalt (d. 1561), (according to others, Prince Wolfgang of Anhalt (d. 1566)), memorized this hymn and used it as a daily prayer. It was the favorite hymn of the elector Christian I of Saxony. It also proved a great source of comfort to Eber himself as he was about to die. Originally, the hymn had eight stanzas. When and by whom it was expanded to twelve is unknown.