



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Minnesota South District

*... cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God*

February 25, 2020 – Lent

*Jesus, I will ponder now on your holy passion;  
With your Spirit me endow for such meditation*  
Sigismund von Birken, LSB 440

**Dear Brothers in Christ,**

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Since at least the fourth century, Christians have observed a 40-day period of fasting and prayer in preparation for the joyous celebration of Jesus' resurrection. But Lent has fallen out of fashion these days. Six weeks of unrelenting focus on Christ's cross and suffering seems pretty depressing to our contemporaries.

We Christians, however, glory in the cross of Christ—even with all its blood and gore:

*"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14)*

For precisely in His bodily suffering and agonizing death, our Lord has won salvation for the whole world. Therefore, the season of Lent and the momentous saga of our redemption that is Holy Week and Easter also serve a mission goal. These extra liturgical observances are our church's countercultural witness to Jesus and His saving work. Wrapping our people in the life of Christ all the more helps equip them to witness and serve in their daily vocations in the name of Christ. Yet Lent brings the emphasis that to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, we need to share in His suffering, becoming like Him in His death:

*"that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death ..." (Philippians 3:10)*

So courage, then, for the duration.

Don't let Lent get you down. It's a time of refreshment and renewal, provided you take the time to care for your own soul even as you care for others' souls. Repentance brings renewal, a change of mind and heart. Repentance means turning from sin and turning to Christ. You know that, of course, since you are all trained theologians and pastors. But today I want to address you very personally as a Christian and brother in office.

All the sins that weigh you down—those sins you've been denying and the ones you know all too well—were placed on Jesus so you could go free. All those wounds you carry because of the sins done against you; that whole sorry mess was laid on Jesus ahead of you. Thank God, you may be certain that by His blood and cross He has removed forever the penalty that stood against you. But He didn't just bear all your sins in His sinless body; He carried all your sorrows too. He

understands the burdens you bear. Therefore, take heart, for you are no longer alone. The Lord Christ walks with you day by day. He is closer to you in His Word (Luther once wrote) “than your little son with his arms around your neck.”

Spend time with Jesus this Lent, won't you?

Because you are extra busy in these days, you'll need to be extra careful to set aside some time for quiet meditation on His Word and focused prayer. You can cast all your cares on Him, confident that He cares for you right now, since once He shed His blood and gave His body all for you. Consider meeting with your father or brother-confessor sometime this Lent—or find one if you haven't already done so. Every pastor needs a pastor himself.

Blessings, dear brother, as you preach Christ and Him crucified to the sinner-saints in your flock throughout this holy season. But don't neglect the sinner-saint in your mirror. Thank God, the same Lord who ransomed all His sheep from sin and death by His cross and resurrection has also rescued those of us who tend His flock!

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford