



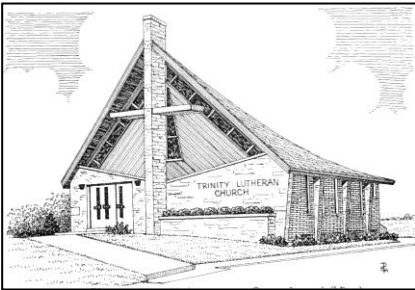
THE TRINITY CATECHEUMENT

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
"Tender Evangelical Loving Care"

A quarterly newsletter for the Lutheran Community of
TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
between Girard and Virden

SPRING 2009

ISSUE 1, NUMBER 1



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Divine Service

Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Sundays 10 a.m.

Advent and Lenten Services
Wednesdays 7:00 p.m.

Private Confession & Absolution
(by appointment)

Bible Studies

Nursery through 8th Grade Sunday School
Sunday Mornings 9:00 a.m.

High School and College Bible Class
Sunday Mornings 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Morning Bible Class
9:00 a.m.
(Isaiah the Prophet)

LWML Bible Study
1st Thursday 9:00 a.m.

Fellowship Pot Luck
Every 5th Sunday After Service

Catechesis

Adult Information Class
Sunday Afternoons
3:00 p.m.

Youth Confirmation Class
Wednesday Evenings
6:00 p.m.

Lent and Holy Week at Trinity

Wednesday evenings during Lent will focus on Luther's Small Catechism. Wednesday Lenten services begin Ash Wednesday with the Divine Service and the Imposition of Ashes and continue each Wednesday until Holy Week with a Vespers service featuring the praying of the Litany.

Be sure to attend the Holy Week services at Trinity, which are the richest services of the year liturgically. Palm Sunday we will begin with the Procession of Palms into the church for the Divine Service. On Maundy Thursday, we will celebrate the New Covenant of Holy Communion with a Divine Service which concludes with the ceremonial stripping of the altar. Good Friday commemorates our Lord's death with both a Noonday service and a more elaborate evening service with Bidding Prayer, Reproaches and Adoration of Christ on the Cross. We will celebrate the Great Vigil of Easter on Saturday evening, focusing on Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets, His victory over the grave, and our victory in Baptism. Easter morning we will rejoice in our Lord's resurrection from the dead with a full-blown festival service.

Ash Wednesday - February 25 at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesdays in Lent - 7:00 p.m.

Palm Sunday - April 5 at 10 a.m.

Maundy Thursday - April 9 at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday - April 10

Noonday Service at 12:00 p.m.

Evening Service at 7:00 p.m.

Easter Vigil - Saturday April 11 at 5:30 p.m.

Easter Sunrise Service - April 12 at 7:00 a.m.

Easter Breakfast - April 12 at 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

Easter Festive Service - April 12 at 10:00 a.m.

Ash Wednesday Soup & Sandwich Supper

Come early on Ash Wednesday to enjoy delicious soups to start the Lenten season at Trinity. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the back of church. Supper begins at 5:30 p.m.

Lenten Midweek Coffee and Dessert

Each Wednesday of Lent following Ash Wednesday will have coffee and dessert after the midweek service. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the back of church.

Easter Breakfast

The Youth group will be putting on an Easter Breakfast again this Easter Sunday. Breakfast will be served from 8:30-9:45 a.m. Freewill donations will be received to help fund Youth activities and projects.

‘Remember, that You Are Dust...’

Considering the Imposition of Ashes for Ash Wednesday

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”



For nearly a thousand years, these words have been spoken to young and old alike as the sign of the cross is traced on their foreheads with ashes—the Imposition of Ashes, as it has come to be known. During the last half of the 20th century, Lutherans have also begun to make use of this ancient rite, and indeed, it has been approved for use in the forthcoming *Lutheran Service Book*. And so, as our catechism is prone to ask: “What does this mean?” Where did this rite come from, and how can it be used meaningfully in LCMS congregations today?

Ashes in the Bible

The Bible contains a number of references to ashes and dust (cf. Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2, 15:32; Job 2:12, 16:15; Jer. 25:34; Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 27:30; Jonah 3:6). In fact, the Lord's curse on Adam, “*dust you are, and to dust you shall return*” (Gen. 3:19) is echoed in the Imposition of Ashes formula. In the New Testament, Jesus declares: “*Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes*” (Matt. 11:21). Thus, in the Bible, ashes carry a two-fold meaning: as a sign of human mortality (Gen. 3:19) and as a sign of public repentance (Matt. 11:21).

Ashes in Church History

This understanding carried over into the early and medieval church. Tertullian (ca. 160-225) describes the use of sackcloth and ashes in the penance of an adulterer before his pastor. Originally, ashes were reserved only for public penitents—i.e., murderers, adulterers and others who had fallen away from the church because of grave public sin but desired reconciliation. Such reconciliation could occur at a variety of times during the year, but by the medieval period, the beginning of Lent became a primary season of the church year for that reconciliation to take place.

By the 12th century, ashes became specifically associated with the beginning of Lent, thus providing the first day of Lent with its name, Ash Wednesday. However, by this time, everybody—pastors and people alike—had ashes either sprinkled on their head or traced on their foreheads in the sign of the cross. By the time of the Reformation, the imposition of ashes was a regular mainstay of Lenten piety and practice.

However, Lutherans at the time of the Reformation did not choose to retain the Imposition of Ashes. The reasons for this are not entirely clear since there is very little written for or against this practice by Luther and his colleagues. Thus, although Lutherans began Lent with Ash Wednesday, they did not retain the use of ashes as part of their Ash Wednesday order of service.

Ashes Today?

A contemporary Lutheran appropriation of the Imposition of Ashes should begin with the two-fold biblical understanding of ashes: as a sign of our mortality and as a sign of our repentance. Likewise, the traditional formula, “*Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return,*” is most appropriate, since it paraphrases the words of God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:19). By receiving the ashes, the worshipper acknowledges that God's judgment against our sin is right and just. But the ashes are also made in the sign of the cross—the very instrument by which our Lord took upon himself the punishment for our sin, in our place. Thus, the cross of ashes serves to remind us that we are sinners, and that Christ died for us sinners. This is exactly what the rite in Lutheran Service calls for.

Imposition of Ashes in the *LSB Agenda*

The rite begins the service for Ash Wednesday, with the pastor calling the congregation to observe the holy season of Lent:

Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope. . . .

The congregation then joins in praying the ancient Litany, a responsive prayer for all sorts and conditions of humanity. The Litany concludes with an additional collect, then the pastor and assistants receive ashes first, followed by the congregation. Using the right thumb, the pastor or an assistant places the ashes on the forehead of each person, saying: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” After receiving the ashes, each person returns to his place in silence. The hymn “Savior, When in Dust to Thee” or other appropriate hymns or Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) may be sung during the imposition of ashes. After all have received the ashes, the service continues with the rite of Confession and Absolution or the rite of Corporate Confession and Absolution.

When considered in its larger liturgical context, the Imposition of Ashes could really be viewed as a special way to prepare for Confession and Absolution on Ash Wednesday. The ashes particularly remind us of our sin and mortality and of our need for our Savior, and the opportunity to confess our sins and receive absolution immediately following is a wonderful thing. One pastor writes:

On this past Ash Wednesday I imposed the ashes upon foreheads of all shapes and sizes, under gray, receding hair and on smooth baby skin. I saw how the ashes quieted the agitation of an older woman, her thin body hunched over in a wheelchair. My thumb painted the cross crudely upon the wrinkled forehead of a 100-year-old man. An 18-month-old baby clutched his mother's arm. “Remember you are dust,” I said. I moved aside the blonde bangs of a young girl just turning 13, her braces shining as she smiled at what she would later tell her parents was “a weird sensation.” The final couple had been married only a few years. “And to dust you shall return,” I said. (Brett Webb-Mitchell, “The Disturbing Ashes of Lent: Ash Wednesday Shatters Our Denial of Death,” Christian Ministry, March/April 1998).

So what happens after you leave Ash Wednesday with those ashes on your forehead? The first thing that happens is that you go out into the world where others will see that cross on your forehead. Although reactions may vary, your silent witness has been given: you have been marked as one redeemed by Christ the crucified!



But the other thing that happens is that you will eventually go home and wash those dirty ashes off your face once and for all. And doesn't that water also become a concrete, tactile reminder of the water of your baptism, where your sins were washed away forever? God's grace abounds!

Renewing the Quarantine of Lent

In his *Manual on the Liturgy* (Augsburg, 1979), Philip Pfatteicher parenthetically comments that in the early centuries of the church, the 40-day period of penitential discipline before Easter was called quarantine, meaning "forty" (p. 306). Of course, our common use of the word refers to the need of isolating and treating people who have been infected with a highly communicable disease. There is no more widespread, inherited

disease in our world than sin. It is the cause of death. As the Christian life remains the "feeble struggle," Saint and Sinner Simultaneously. Lent is a liturgical time for extended repentance, faith and renewal toward holy living both for those who have been Christians for many years, as well as for those who are only now being formed and prepared for the new birth by water and the Word at the Easter Vigil.

In his article, "Liturgical Renewal in the Parish," (Lutheran Worship: History and Practice [CPH 1993]), Arthur Just notes that in the early church "catechesis was a vibrant force in the conversion of adults, shaped around the church year as the Lenten preparation for Baptism in the Easter vigil" (p. 35). A growing number of Lutheran pastors and musicians are discovering this ancient practice and meaning of Lent as one of the most vital keys to the growth and health of the church today.

The times in which we live certainly demand a new perspective. One pastor in Canada has observed: Because of a shift in our culture, we are faced with new questions. Many have grown up in this society with no Christian memory. Recent immigration has brought many people from other cultures and religions to our land. How shall such people be incorporated into Christ [or] how shall people who have been baptized but have not attended the church come to an understanding of Christ's call for them to live the gospel? (Frederick Ludolph, Living Witness: The Adult Catechumenate, [ELCIC, 1992] pp. 3).

Our American culture in recent years bears many similarities with the setting of the first three centuries. More and more people are growing to adulthood in this "new" mission field of North America unbaptized and even having never heard the claims of the Gospel of Christ!

It is for both the renewal of the church and evangelistic outreach that we ought to consider how to go about planning for the season of Lent.

Reviving the Catechumenate

For guidance in such renewal and outreach, the practice of the early church is instructive. A pastor could, for example, intentionally coordinate both the Sundays in (note, not "of") Lent and our tradition of midweek Lenten services with a new member class every year. When you think about it, our habit of calling our membership classes "Adult Information Classes" starts on the wrong foot, for the Christian faith and life is much more than merely the acquiring of certain religious information. Initiation is a better word. And process is a better concept, since Christians are in a state of becoming their whole life long.

One exciting insight about Lent is that the appointed Gospels for series A of the lectionary have been shown to reflect the ancient outline of the catechumenate (Matthew 4:1- 11, the role of temptation and sin; John 4:5-42, the Samaritan woman and the theme of living water; John 9:1-41, the Man Born Blind and the theme of spiritual blindness and sight; Matthew 20:17-28, servanthood; John 11:1-53, the Raising of Lazarus and the theme of faith). Sin and death, Living Water and the New Birth, the vision of faith, the life of service to God and neighbor, and the participation in the resurrection already now by faith which empowers the living and certain hope of the resurrection of the body at the Last Day-these are the fundamentals that form and shape the Christian.

Ash Wednesday

Because Ash Wednesday has its own character as the beginning of the Lenten discipline, it should not be used as the first in any "series" of themes. It is the beginning of a 40-day- long process: the extended confession of sins of Ash Wednesday looking forward to the absolution and reconciliation of Maundy Thursday and the Triduum through Holy Saturday. Make it obvious that there is no absolution on this day, but only the desire for a good Lent. (See the Lutheran Worship Agenda, pp. 15-19, for details regarding the opening confession/litany.)

Midweek Services

In order to emphasize the unity of the forty days of Lent, the service folders for the Wednesdays of Lent could be titled, "The [Seventh, Thirteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-fifth, Thirty-first] Day of (not "in"!) Lent."

Though themes (and hymns) taken from Good Friday may be useful, the catechetical/formative character of Lent should be clear so that the people do not perceive the season only as "a 40-day Good Friday."

Midweek services could profitably be used for catechesis using the catechism. How many of our pastors, much less parents, even know the catechism "by heart" today? Luther's words of concern in the preface to his Large Catechism are most appropriate:

Many regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once, they toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again (Tappert, p. 359).

By contrast, consider Luther's personal attitude:

I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly (p. 359).

Since there are five midweek services, Our Series this year will focus on:

- Luther's Small: The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, Baptism, The Office of the Keys, and emphasizing the Sacrament of the Altar on Maundy Thursday, being careful to preserve the primary theme of Maundy Thursday-reconciliation and the new command (mandatum) "that you love one another."

- In conjunction with the focus on the six chief parts, Luther's catechism hymns commend themselves:

LW 331 - Here Is the Tenfold Sure Command

LW 213 - We All Believe in One True God

LW 431 - Our Father, Who from Heaven Above

LW 223 - To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord

LW 230 - From Depths of Woe I Cry to You

LW 236-237 - Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior (Note that Luther did not write this hymn)

- A series on the penitential psalms: 6, 32, 38, 102, 143.

Evening Prayer

Some details concerning the most effective leading of Evening Prayer are worth noting. The proper versicles for Lent in the Service of Light can be printed out in the service folder pointed to the same chant tones (LW p. 250):

L: Now is the time of God's / favor;

C: now is the day of sal-/va-tion.

L: Turn us again, O God of our sal-/vation,

C: that the light of your face may shine / on us.

L: May your justice shine / like the sun;

C: and may the poor be lift-/ed up.

The use of a large candle (not the Paschal Candle) and the subsequent lighting of the remaining chancel lights by the acolyte from the large candle during the singing of the Phos Hilaron ("Joyous light of glory") is an especially meaningful and reverent ritual.

In addition to the Evening Prayer setting of Psalm 141 (pp. 253-55), at least one additional psalm that reflects the theme of the service should be included for the people to pray. The psalmody, of course, is the true heart and soul of Evening Prayer. The psalms are still the best teacher of prayer. It is worth the effort to employ many varied musical treatments of the psalms. It is more appropriate to end each psalm with the Gloria Patri even though a psalm prayer may be used.

The use of the alternate chant-form of the Litany (LBW p. 148) is especially conducive to the atmosphere of communal prayer. The congregation begins its response with the word "Lord" at the same

moment the leader says the word in his final phrase, "let us pray to the Lord." One final word of warning, however: At the remembrance of "the faithful who have gone before us...", the congregation needs to be instructed to sing "Thanks be to God" in place of the alleluia for obvious reasons.

The Triduum

The Lenten discipline culminates in the Triduum, the three-day-long service of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Vigil of Holy Saturday. Here ritual may speak more eloquently and deeper than words as our time is sanctified by walking through the reconciliation of the Upper Room, to the foot of the Cross at Calvary, through the font of the Vigil to the mystery of our Lord's resurrection.

Conclusion

The Quarantine of Lent is meant for renewal of faith and life and for the making of new Christians. It is for the diagnosis and treatment of sin. And though the reality is that we're never quite done with sin in this life, the point is that it need no longer be contagious. Rather, it is as new and renewed people of Christ that we become the bearers of the infection of holiness-salt and light in the world today.

A CLOSER LOOK AT HOLY WEEK

Passion Sunday with Procession of Palms

We begin Holy week with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) with the full account of his suffering and death (Passion Sunday).

Holy Thursday

A complete service for this day includes an expanded Confession and Absolution. The conclusion of the service includes direction for the Stripping of the Altar, a custom that many congregations have incorporated for many years.

Good Friday

Two distinct services are provided on this day. The chief service or the Stations of the Cross, as we follow Jesus from the trial to the cross and from the cross to the grave. It includes the Reproaches and an expanded version of the Bidding Prayer.

A second service for Good Friday is Tenebrae Vespers. This service is used in many congregations and is also known as the services of "darkness." During the passion reading candles are extinguished until total darkness with the exception of the Christ candle burns until the vigil of the resurrection

Vigil of Easter

The Easter Vigil begins with the Service of Light as we watch for the resurrection of our Lord. The service then includes several scriptural readings to walk us through our need for a Savior. Next in the service is a remembrance of Baptism.

In many Churches the rite of Youth and Adult confirmation is at this point. It points us to our commitment to Christ and His leading us out of the darkness of death into the light of Eternal Life in His resurrection.

An Easter Litany follows, as well as the Easter Gospel. Final we celebrate His gift of life to us in the Lord's Supper. With this we return home until the Sunrise and Festive Services of Easter Morning.