



# COD LENTEN NEWSLETTER NO 1.

Dear Reader

A special greeting to you as we embark on our Lenten walk.

Whilst following the steps of our Lord to Calvary and contemplating His wondrous love bestowed on each of us, may we be grateful that this love is irrespective of race, colour, creed, nationality.

Lent is usually associated with prayer, fasting, contemplation and do I like to highlight some aspects in this regard.

I pray that this yearly exercise in the Liturgical year will enlighten your mind, enrich your faith and enlarge your heart with the Love of Christ that will be a blessing to others.

## 1. WHAT'S YO TAKE?

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome the evil with good. Rom 12:21.*

Do you have an ELCSA Almanac? Then you would have recognized our motto for the year. Under this “umbrella”, this little booklet, when utilized daily, allows us to gain strength as you daily make God’s

promises/guidance your own. If you don't have an Almanac, does it bother you that you do not have this guiding tool of ELCSA? Is it of any worth or is it only for the pastors and elders (preachers?) Ok, yes, I agree you have the Bible, but here we have a tool that is directed at the heart and worship in the Lutheran Church.

I hope you will participate in prayer along the daily themes set out so that we can bring these before the throne of God. Furthermore, may the daily readings permeate your daily chores and may his presence bring a serenity and peace that passes all understanding.

N.B. I wonder what the effects would be if indeed all of COD (ELCSA!) will indeed pray to God!

Whatever you take, please keep on praying as prayer is the exercise of the spirit as thinking is for the brain (Mary F. Smith).

## **2. WHERE ARE WE AT THIS ASH WEDNESDAY, 2011? WHAT IS HAPPENING TO CHRIST'S CHURCH? DOES IT CONCERN ME?**

Let me keep it short by just concentrating on 4 directions and the happenings there.

When we go east, we feel for those living against the backdrop of devastation and destruction in areas in New Zealand. This period will forever be remembered for their loss and vulnerability. What is Christ's Church doing? Let us be careful of apathy due to the distance on the one hand, and complacency as we are so used to devastation and pain.

In fact, we are so used that our "caring nerves" have been numbed or just self (short) circuited to survive in life. Let us spare a thought for them and many South Africans who have migrated there. Some of you might even have relatives and friends working in these areas. So spare a thought.

To west (north west to be precise) a stalemate is destroying a country where two cocks want to be the ruler of the pen. Rather than using their human skill, they opt to destroy one another and their people. We know that sadly when two bulls fight the innocent grass usually endure the most pain. I pray that sense will prevail and that the South African government, the African Union and related bodies will stop counting their own costs and intervene in this matter.

To the north, the Arab world is in situation of flux. After decades of unilateral rule, the people are revolting and demanding change. Do we intercede for them? Is it beyond our prayer boundaries? Is there another Force at work in the Middle East? Well, we better pray as the humanitarian crisis is growing daily and unless the fighting is resolved soon, at your pocket and at the fuel pump we will feel the pinch soon. May God have mercy on all his children.

Lastly, in the south, and that is in our own country a racial row centering mostly on the Western Cape, is rearing its ugly head. Instead of celebrating our democracy, it is eroding, as racial discrimination as proposed in new legislation can do more harm as the powers that be can think. Is it about the political position of these groups vis-à-vis the ruling party or really about a distribution of competencies? Does it concern you?

Well, it probably depends on your race. Affirmative measures, depending on the right color can result in huge benefits on various spheres, but at whose expense? Can we afford dissatisfactions and divisions? What will be the ultimate result if tensions result in violence? May God have mercy on us and may sanity and justice prevail.

*We can do much more than pray after we have prayed. But you can do nothing more than pray before you have prayed* (John Bunyan)

### **3. WHAT DOES FASTING DURING LENT ENTAIL?**

Lent is with us again and so the issue of fasting comes to the fore again. On Ash Wednesday we will start our commemorative time of revisiting what our Lord and Savior set out to achieve for us. Some would like to devote time to fasting, but

what is the core of it? Do you want to fast, but think you are unable? Should we make a fuss of it and let everyone know about our intentions or is it a personal decision which only your Creator need to be aware of? Do you envy others who fast?

Isaiah 58 gives us a completely different take on fasting. Instead of mere outwards expressions (vv1-5), going through the motions, real corrective issues are touched and focused upon (vv.6ff.). Injustice, oppression, hunger, homelessness, nakedness, indifference are highlighted. Where these are still present in our lives or operational sphere fasting would be of no value. On the contrary where there is a right relationship with God and our fellow human beings, the blessings we are striving for in fasting, will be a natural outflow (vv.8, 9).

I urge you to read Isaiah 58 as it is really a mirror image of our Lord's view in Matthew 25: 31ff where He spells out what is the most important in life. In gratefulness for what He has done for us there is little we can do to thank Him, but much we can do for our neighbor. May the Holy Spirit give us insight concerning our contributions to bring about His kingdom.

#### **4. WHOSE WILL IS SUPREME?**

I urge you to contemplating the following prayer by Pastor Joe Wright (cf Internet):

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good,," but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values.

We confess:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it Pluralism.

We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism.

We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle.

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

We have killed our unborn and called it choice.

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.

We have abused power and called it politics.

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free.

Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of your will.

I ask it in the Name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.