



Dear Parish Family,

Do Lutherans fast? The short answer is Yes. In the Exhortation of Ash Wednesday, the pastor calls the congregation to repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love as part of our spiritual warfare in which we fight against all that would lead us from love of God and neighbor. Notice that we are called to fast in this exhortation.

In his Examination of the Council of Trent, Lutheran theologian, Martin Chemnitz devotes an entire section to fasting. He makes valuable observations about fasting that we should keep in mind during Lent. His argument is based on Scriptures and the Church Fathers in so far as the Fathers conform to Scriptural teaching. Among his salient points are:

1. Fasting is not satisfaction for sins and does not justify the sinner, only God's grace received in faith can do this.
2. The Church should not impose periods of fasting under the pain of mortal sin. The Scriptures do not require fasting at certain solemn times of the Church year.
3. However, the Scriptures do call the faithful to fast, which should be a discipline that is voluntarily practiced by Christians. Lent is a solemn time when we should consider fasting.
4. Fasting is associated with repentance, prayer, and works of love. It is a discipline that can help control the body and aid in prayer, repentance, and discipleship.
5. The Scriptures do not impose on us a distinction of foods. All foods are gifts from God's good creation. Christians are not prohibited certain foods as Israel was in the Law. When we fast we should not deny ourselves certain foods and then go about eating sumptuous foods. It is best to fast until evening and then eat simple foods.

These suggestions are good advice based on evangelical teaching. Fasting may help us in our spiritual struggle. We should consider such a discipline for Lent.

Ash Wednesday is March 1. Let us look to the solemn Lenten season as a time for spiritual renewal and growth in faith.

In Christ,

Pastor Mike and Mandy