



**Upper Susquehanna Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

*Pastoral Letter*  
*from Bishop Robert Driesen*

*Ash Wednesday,*  
*February 25, 2009*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The forty days of Lent have been observed by the church since the time of Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) as a season to reflect upon our Lord's forty days in the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan to embrace a life other than the one that was willed for him by his Father. As he prayed and fasted, our Lord clung to the Word of God as the source of his nourishment and strength, crying out, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."

This Lent, as we should every year, I urge us to fast, pray and give alms in whatever ways that honor our Lord's life — his suffering and dying, his death and time in the grave —for us. For surely with him, we shall experience with joy beyond our description the end of our death, our grave, our hell, our sin.

Jesus was often found in prayer, the contents of which we know but little, except for his prayer for the coming kingdom, his three fold prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and his prayer as our great high priest in the room of the Passover. Nonetheless, allow me to be so bold as suggest something about the content of our prayers this Lent:

- Pray for the members of our congregations as they face the joys and struggles of life in their own wilderness journeys;
- Pray for those suffering as the result of our nation's economic recession, as well as those given the responsibility of leadership as they seek solutions;
- Pray for the Upper Susquehanna Synod and its bishop that we may remain faithful to the life and mission our Lord has entrusted to us;
- Pray for the Evangelical Church in America as it seeks answers to difficult questions.

Let us examine our piety this Lenten season —our actions inspired by our devotion to this Jesus, the One who was there before the world began and whose Word brought creation and us into being, and who traveled the Via Dolorosa to Calvary, the cross and the grave.

Lent, 2009