



Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### Matthew 6:16-18 – Concerning Fasting

***“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”***

Okay, so on Ash Wednesday, join me in fasting for the children who are not seen, join me in fasting for one of the seemingly biggest secrets on earth: we can control outbreaks of malaria so children don't have to die because of it any longer.

Don't put oil on your head; put a check in the offering plate for the ELCA Malaria Campaign for the least of these that our Heavenly Father loves like we love our very own.

Don't wash your face; mark your face with the cross that speaks to giving your life away so that another who was in the grasp of death might have life.

In the last 8 days Lynda and I have added another \$400 or another 40 nets. We passed giving 100 nets two years ago, but we keep gifts designated when we can for this campaign in the effort to bring one more nation, one more region, one more village to turn an epidemic into an ability to keep outbreaks manageable and hundreds of afflicted to several.

And while I seem to be contradicting the Sermon on the Mount's admonition for hiding my lamp of faith, it does seem to come close to fulfill the call to be salt and light for the children of this world.

On this Ash Wednesday, I will confess this to you, my countenance will not be dismal. My forehead will bear the ashes of my death, but my checks, I pray, will sustain life in the Name of our Lord.

I remember my Lutheran sister I met from India at the 2010 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. She shared with me that when the food ran out, they fasted with thanksgiving, until the food would return. Fasting is not just a religious spiritual practice, it also is a faithful response to a real circumstance. So may our gifts this day be the same as we remember children in need around the globe and especially in Africa – giving and praying until health returns to them.

(From the ELCA Malaria Resources)

"We gather today to stand with our sisters and brothers in Africa who live with the constant threat of malaria.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We walk with them on the long, rutted road to the clinic.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We keep vigil at the bedside of children and pregnant women stricken by malaria.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We accompany the doctors, nurses, and family members who care tirelessly for malaria patients.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We embrace the parents who grieve the loss of children to malaria, and we weep with those who have lost wives and mothers.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We despair with those who are burdened by poverty and the financial costs of malaria.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We pray for the success of researchers who discover methods of prevention and treatment and for village health care teams as they educate people about malaria.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

We wait in hope with our sisters and brothers for the day when malaria will be no more.

***Use us, O Lord, to rebuke the fever.***

Open our hearts, O Lord, and infect them with generosity and love for your people so that through our gifts and serving lives might be changed as the fever of malaria is rebuked; in Jesus' name. **Amen"**