

March 10, 2019 – Lent 1 (C)

Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent - TURN

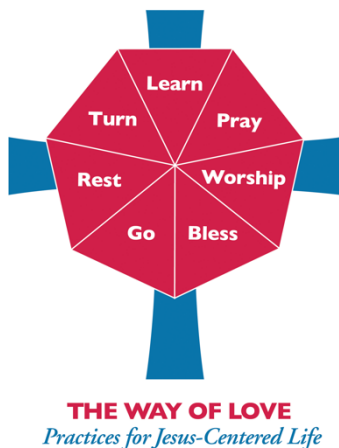
The journey through Lent into Easter is a journey with Jesus. We are baptized into his life, selfgiving, and death; then, we rise in hope to life transformed. Drawing on the ancient practice of setting aside Lent as a period of study and preparation for living as a Christian disciple (known as the catechumenate), we are pleased to present weekly teachings from *Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent*. This resource, which ties the Easter Vigil lessons to the seven practices of the Way of Love, encourages Episcopalians and others to reflect on salvation history; walk toward the empty tomb; and embrace the transforming reality of love, life, and liberation. Learn more at episcopalchurch.org/life-transformed.

READ Romans 6:3-11

For the ancient Church, the Easter Vigil was the night when catechumens (those who had been studying for months in preparation of their baptisms) would enter into the waters of new birth and emerge members of Christ's body, the Church.

Our current baptismal practices rarely do justice to the drama that those nights would contain. We have evidence that catechumens would be asked to stand on a hair-shirt (a mark of penitence), confess their sins, and renounce Satan and all the forces of wickedness that drew them from the love of God. As they did so, they would turn toward the West – the direction associated with death, since the sun always sets over the western horizon. Then, they would *TURN* and face the East – the direction of new life and resurrection.

As they watched the sun begin to rise, they would make their profession of faith and walk into the large font. Indeed, the fonts would likely have been shaped as crosses or sarcophagi (a larger, more elaborate casket) to call to mind Paul's words about being buried with Christ in baptism. A jar of oil would be poured over their heads, and they would be dressed in a gleaming white garment. Finally, they would be ushered into another room where all their Christian brothers and sisters would greet them. The room was lit with the new fire of Easter, and they were invited to taste their first Eucharist.



The drama and mystery of the moment are palpable even now, and it is no wonder that this ancient rite has been adopted into our modern Easter practices and every baptism. In our baptism, we have turned from a life of sin and begun to walk the Way of Love back to God. In our baptism, we have turned from death itself and been joined with Christ in his everlasting life. And in our baptism, we have turned from living a life alone and have become one with the whole Church as members of the Body of Christ.

REFLECT: In his letter to the Romans, Paul lays out his theological belief that baptism is the *turning* point in our new life with Christ. It is the time that we leave the life of sin and death behind us to be born to life that is eternal. What are the places in your life that need to be turned back to God so that new life can break forth?