Reflecting on the first reading for the Easter Vigil, (the creation story from the Book of Genesis,) I am deeply touched by the generosity and the superabundance of God's blessings. The complexity, diversity and interwoven nature of creation never cease to amaze me. God thought of everything and with this, God has blessed us beyond our wildest dreams. I only need to take a walk in the woods or hike the lush Sonoran desert to be reminded of these blessings and to experience first hand the grace of God. Creation is the context of our faith and a manifestation of a benevolent Creator. As related in today's scripture everything God created is “very good”
indeed. It is hard to imagine how Adam and Eve could turn away from God given the evidence and actuality of this kind of love.

Yes, their turning away is inconceivable, until we reflect on our own fall, despite the miracles in our own lives. We make our choices and conceive in ourselves the same rejection of God’s abundant blessing as did Adam & Eve. We reject God’s blessing in favor of our own limited desires for passing glory. How could we think for a minute that what we choose to create would be better than that which has been gifted to us from the beginning? In fact, much of what we have created has despoiled God’s creation.

The story of salvation history, told through the several readings of the Easter Vigil, recount the same story we experience in our own individual lives. It is the story of how humans continue to turn away from God, and how God gives his children yet another chance to return. Salvation’s story is a history in travel – during good times we take three steps forward, and then, we get scared or threatened and lose trust, we resort to doing it our way, and this is when we get it wrong – two steps back. In all this, God is not an angry and judgmental god; rather God is a loving and forgiving God. Our God is a God who continues to invite us into a commonwealth of love and justice. So why do we sin and turn away?

As St. Paul writes, “For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want.” (Romans 7:19) We pray “thy will be done,” but it ends up being more about our own willfulness, then our willingness to allow God to guide and inspire our lives. At particularly troubling times in history, God has sent prophets to challenge our wrong-headedness and to call us to account, and to lead us back. The words of these messengers of truth are often rejected, and the prophet murdered. Even in our own day, few prophets are honored during their own lives, as was St. Teresa of Calcutta. More frequently they are rejected and murdered as was Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. It seems that only the outcasts and vagabonds love the prophets.

The story we hear this weekend culminates in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. During his life, Jesus is at first seen as a prophet, then as the miracle worker, but finally rejected and murdered as a heretic. Perhaps what they wanted was a King who would wage war against their oppressors – what they got instead was the unlikely image of a “king riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden (Matthew 21:5).” ‘He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).’

When Jesus was arrested, accused, and questioned, he refused to retaliate or even defend himself. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him (John 3:17).” …and saving the world will not come through violence or military conquest, but through the power of love. “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53)?” A military campaign was not to be the path through which Jesus would claim victory. The path to conquer sin and death was to be the Via Dolorosa.

Only after the crucifixion did Jesus’ disciples come to the full realization that he was the Christ. Jesus is the One to bring creation to completion and the Via Dolorosa is the example of what it means for us to turn radically toward God. Jesus submits to God’s will, and his cross becomes the key to the gates of Hell. With this key he gains the release of captives, beginning with Adam. The path to Calvary is the way in our lives as well. To walk this path with Jesus is to become (whole) holy people. This comes to fruition in the ‘second coming,’ the advent of Christ.
in each of us as we follow our Savior. We become the ‘Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27),’ and the Kingdom of God within us (Cf Luke 17:21), and the Kingdom of God now! God’s Kingdom is already fulfilled, but not yet consummated. When it is consummated there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and the turning will have come full circle.