

The 2nd of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is: "to begin with the end in mind." What Covey means by this is that we should envision, as concretely as we can, what we want or need in the near or distant future – a short-term or long-term goal – and then work toward achieving it.

When we begin with the end in mind, Covey thinks, it makes putting up with inconveniences, set-backs, road blocks, delayed gratification, pains and sufferings along the way --- easier to maneuver and get through – because we have that vision pulling us along.

Begin with the end in mind – may not be a bad strategy for Lent ---

At the end of this 40 day journey – we gather around the fire at the Easter Vigil. There we share in the light of God's glory brought to us through the gift of Jesus Christ – who is the light of the world.

We pray that we may be inflamed with new hope. That our minds may be purified, and that one day we will be brought to the feast of eternal light.

We continue to pray that the light of Christ, rising in glory, may dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds – as we proclaim: Christ our Light! And respond: thanks be to God!

For all of this to become possible – we now face these 40 days – knowing that through our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – we can shed old habits and embrace new ones – that will allow us to become more like Christ.

Through these 40 days, we will encounter inconveniences, set-backs, road blocks, delayed gratification, pains and suffering along the way – because change is never easy.

And so we begin with the end in mind – marking ourselves with the residue of fire – these ashes that we will soon bless which will call us to repentance and a reliance upon the values of the Gospel --- so we have a vision pulling us along through those tough times.

We begin with the end in mind – not marking ourselves in some haphazard way – but very deliberately with the sign of the cross – knowing it is only through the death and resurrection of Christ – that change and the promise of new life become possible – so that little by little we may decrease – dying to ourselves --- so that Christ's presence within us may increase.

And so we begin with the end in mind by praying: Christ our Light! Thanks be to God!