

CONCERNING THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

The Great Vigil, when observed, is the first liturgy of Easter Day. It is celebrated at a convenient time between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter morning. It is appropriate that the service begin in darkness. The liturgy normally consists of four parts:

The Service of Light: a new fire is kindled, and from it the Paschal Candle is lit, symbolizing Christ, the light of the world. The Exsultet, an ancient song of praise, is sung or said as the climax of this part of the liturgy.

The Service of Lessons: key passages from Scripture recount the history of God's mighty acts and promises. These readings are accompanied by psalms, canticles, and prayers.

Holy Baptism is the Sacrament through which candidates are united to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (ROMANS 6:3-4), which the Church celebrates on this most holy night. When the Bishop is present, confirmation may also be administered. If there are no candidates for Baptism or confirmation, the Congregation joins in a Renewal of Baptismal Vows.

The Holy Eucharist is the proper culmination of the Easter Liturgy. As we keep this holy feast, we share the joy of our Savior's triumph and are strengthened by his grace to walk in newness of life.

THE
G R E A T V I G I L
of E A S T E R

THE LIGHTING OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE

In the darkness, fire is kindled; after which the Celebrant says

Dear friends in Christ: On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church invites her members, dispersed throughout the world, to gather in vigil and prayer. For this is the Passover of the Lord, in which, by hearing his Word and celebrating his Sacraments, we share in his victory over death.

The Celebrant may say the following prayer

Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your one true light: sanctify this new fire, we pray, and so set us aflame with the fire of your love, that with pure hearts and kindled affections we may attain to the radiance of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If the Paschal Candle is to be marked, it is done at this time (Page 595).

The Celebrant lights the Paschal Candle from the newly kindled fire, and says

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

The Deacon (or the Celebrant if there is no Deacon), bearing the Candle, leads the procession to the chancel, pausing three times and singing or saying

The light of Christ.

People **Thanks be to God.**

If candles have been distributed to members of the Congregation, they are lit from the Paschal Candle. Other candles and lamps in the church, except for those at the Altar, may also be lit.

The Paschal Candle is placed in its stand.

Then the Deacon, or other person appointed, standing near the Candle, customarily sings or says the Exsultet.

THE EXSULTET

Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels,
and let your trumpets shout Salvation
for the victory of our mighty King.

Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth,
bright with a glorious splendor,
for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King.

Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church,
and let your holy courts, in radiant light,
resound with the praises of your people.

All you who stand near this marvelous and holy flame,
pray with me to God the Almighty
for the grace to sing the worthy praise of this great light;

through Jesus Christ his Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Deacon The Lord be with you.

People **And with your spirit.**

Deacon Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Deacon Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly right and good, always and everywhere,
with our whole heart and mind and voice to praise you,
the invisible, almighty, and eternal God,
and your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who paid for us the debt of Adam's sin,
and by his blood delivered your faithful people;
for he is the true Paschal Lamb, the very Lamb of God,
whose blood marks the doorposts of believers
and makes us holy.

This is the night when you brought our forebears,
the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt,
and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night when with a pillar of fire
you banished the darkness of our iniquity.

This is the night when all who believe in Christ
are delivered from the gloom of sin,
and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell,
and rose victorious from the grave.

Our birth would have been no gain,
had we not been redeemed.

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God,
is your mercy and loving kindness to us,
that to redeem a slave, you gave a Son.

O wonderful providence of Adam's sin
destroyed completely by the death of Christ.
O happy fault, which gained for us
so great and glorious a Redeemer.

This is the night of which it is written:
the night shall be as bright as the day.

How holy is this night when wickedness is put to flight,
and sin is washed away.
It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn.
It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this night when earth and heaven are joined,
and Man is reconciled to God.

Therefore, O holy Father, accept our evening sacrifice,
the offering of this candle in your honor,
the work of bees and of your servants' hands,
the gift of your most holy Church.
May it mingle with the lights of heaven,
and shine continually to drive away all darkness.
May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting,
find it ever burning—he who gives his light to all creation,
and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE LESSONS

The Celebrant may introduce the Scripture readings in these or similar words

Let us hear the record of God's saving deeds in history, remembering how he saved his people in ages past and in the fullness of time sent his Son to be our Redeemer; and let us pray that God may bring to completion in each of us the saving work he has begun.

At least three of the following Lessons are read, of which one is always the Lesson from Exodus. After each Lesson, the Psalm or Canticle listed, or some other suitable psalm, canticle, or hymn, may be said or sung. A period of silence may be kept; and the Collect provided, or some other suitable Collect, may be said.

THE CREATION

GENESIS 1:1—2:3

PSALM 104:1-13 (14-24)^v or

A SONG OF CREATION (*Supplemental Canticle 10*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE FALL

GENESIS 3

PSALM 32

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, you sent your blessed Son, the seed of the woman, that he might crush the serpent's head and make all creation new:

Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE FLOOD

GENESIS 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-20; 9:8-13

PSALM 36 *or* PSALM 46

Let us pray. *Silence*

Grant, Lord, that we who are baptized into the death of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ may continually put to death our evil desires and be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection; through the merits of him who died and was buried and rose again for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

GENESIS 22:1-18

PSALM 16

Let us pray. *Silence*

Almighty God, whose servant Abraham faithfully obeyed your call, and rejoiced to see the day of your Son: Multiply the number of your children by the grace of the Lamb who was slain; that your Church may also rejoice to see your promise to our father Abraham fulfilled; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE AT THE RED SEA

EXODUS 14:10—15:1

THE SONG OF MOSES (*Supplemental Canticle 5*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, whose wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day, by the power of your mighty arm you once delivered your chosen people from slavery under Pharaoh, to be a sign for us of the salvation offered to all nations by the water of Baptism: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may be numbered among the offspring of Abraham, and rejoice in the inheritance of Israel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

GOD'S PRESENCE IN A RENEWED ISRAEL

ISAIAH 4:2-6

PSALM 122

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, you led your ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant that we, who serve you now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where all tears are wiped away and where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SALVATION OFFERED FREELY TO ALL

ISAIAH 55:1-11

SURELY, IT IS GOD WHO SAVES ME (*Supplemental Canticle 8*) or

PSALM 42:1-7

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, you have created all things by the power of your Word, and you renew the earth by your Spirit: Give the water of life to all who thirst for you, that they may bring forth abundant fruit in your glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

EZEKIEL 36:24-28

PSALM 42:1-7 *or*

SURELY, IT IS GOD WHO SAVES ME (*Supplemental Canticle 8*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

Heavenly Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit you promise your faithful people new life in the water of Baptism: Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit, that we who are born again may serve you in faith and love, and grow into the full stature of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

PSALM 30 *or* PSALM 126

Let us pray. *Silence*

Lord God of our salvation, you speak the word to your scattered people, and raise us up from the valley of death: Breathe your Spirit upon your Church, that we may live and stand before you confident in your risen Son our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

THE THREE YOUNG MEN IN THE FURNACE

DANIEL 3:1-28

A SONG OF CREATION (*Supplemental Canticle 10*) or
A SONG OF PRAISE (*Benedictus es, Domine*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, you know that we are set in the midst of many grave dangers, and because of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant that your presence and protection may support us in all trials and carry us through every temptation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

JONAH AND THE FISH

JONAH 1:1—2:10

PSALM 130

Let us pray. *Silence*

Almighty God, by the resurrection of your Son you have brought us out of sin into righteousness and out of death into life: Grant to those who are sealed by your Holy Spirit the will and the power to proclaim you to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

ZEPHANIAH 3:12-20

PSALM 98

Let us pray. *Silence*

Almighty God, you called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: Give us

boldness to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted high upon the Cross, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Or, if the Solemn Collects were not said on Good Friday, the following may be used

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Holy Baptism may be administered here or after the Gospel (and sermon). Confirmation may likewise be administered as provided in Additional Directions. In the absence of Candidates for Baptism or Confirmation, the Celebrant leads the people in the Renewal of Baptismal Vows.

THE EASTER ACCLAMATION

Celebrant Alleluia! Christ is risen!
People **The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

A joyful fanfare may be played, and bells may be rung. The church is lighted, and the candles at the Altar may now be lighted from the Paschal Candle.

The Gloria in Excelsis, or some other hymn of praise, is sung or said

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,**

we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE COLLECT

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People **And with your spirit.**
Celebrant Let us pray.

O God, you made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The service continues with the Epistle reading

ROMANS 6:3-11

*Psalm 114 or some other suitable psalm, hymn, or anthem may be said or sung.
The use of "Alleluia" is particularly appropriate.*

All stand, and the Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according
to Matthew.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

MATTHEW 28:1-10

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

THE SERMON

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, AND THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

Holy Baptism may be administered here. Confirmation may likewise be administered as provided in Additional Directions. In the absence of Candidates for Baptism or Confirmation, the Celebrant leads the people in the Renewal of Baptismal Vows.

The celebration continues with the Prayers of the People.

The Preface of Easter is used at the Eucharist.

The following blessing may be used at the conclusion of the liturgy, in place of the usual blessing.

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

At the Easter Vigil, one of three rites (Holy Baptism; Holy Baptism with Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation; or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows) follows either the Service of Lessons or the Sermon.

If there are Baptisms only, the order for Holy Baptism is followed, beginning with the Exhortation. If there are Baptisms and Confirmations, the order for Holy Baptism with Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation is followed. If there are Confirmations but no Baptisms, the order for Holy Baptism with Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation is used but ordered as follows:

Presentation of Adults Seeking the Laying on of Hands

The Profession of Faith

The Confirmations, Receptions and Reaffirmations

The prayer that begins, “Almighty and everliving God, let your fatherly hand...”

The Easter Vigil then continues with the Easter Acclamation or the Prayers of the People.

According to ancient tradition, the light for the Paschal Candle is taken from newly kindled fire and not from an already existing source of light. If a new fire is kindled outside the building, the people may be invited to gather around the fire and to follow the Paschal Candle in procession.

Other than the Paschal Candle and any candles held by the Congregation, it is desirable that the building remain as dark as possible until the Easter Acclamation.

If desired, a homily may be preached after any of the readings in the Service of Lessons.

After the Easter Acclamation, the joy of the resurrection is appropriately demonstrated by bells and music. Bells may also be rung at the end of the service. In place of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Te Deum Laudamus* or the *Pascha Nostrum*, or some other hymn of praise, may be used.

In the absence of a Bishop or Priest, a Deacon or lay reader may lead the first two parts of the service, the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, and the

Ministry of the Word of the Vigil Eucharist, concluding with the Prayers of the People, the Lord's Prayer, and the Dismissal (but omitting the final blessing). When the services of a Priest cannot be obtained, and with the authorization of the Bishop, a Deacon may also officiate at public Baptism, and may administer Communion from the Sacrament previously consecrated.

Where the Vigil is not celebrated, the marking and lighting of the Paschal Candle may be used to begin the first liturgy of Easter Day.

The Paschal Candle should be lit for all principal services throughout the season of Easter. It is also traditionally used at Baptism and the Burial of the Dead throughout the year.

If desired, the Paschal Candle may be marked before it is lit, as follows.

*As the vertical of the cross is traced
the Celebrant says*

Christ, yesterday and today,

*As the horizontal is traced
the Celebrant says*

the beginning and the end,

As the Alpha is traced

Alpha

As the Omega is traced

and Omega,

*As the first number of the year is traced
the Celebrant say*

all time belongs to him,

As the second number is traced

and all ages;

As the third number is traced

to him be glory and power,

As the fourth number is traced

through every age and for ever.

Amen.

*Nails or incense studs may be
inserted into the Paschal Candle.*

By his holy and glorious wounds
may Christ our Lord guard and
keep us. **Amen.**