

## 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*

Dearly beloved in Christ: On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death unto life, the Church invites her sons and daughters, scattered 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 hast illumined this most holy night with the brightness of thy one true Light: Sanctify this new fire, we beseech thee, and so set us aflame with the fire of thy love, that with pure hearts and kindled affections we may attain unto the radiance of thy 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, in glory rising, banish all darkness of heart and mind.

*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, ye 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 hath been vanquished by our eternal King.

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

All ye that 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 liveth and reignth with him,  
in the unity of the Holy Ghost,  
ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

*Deacon* The Lord be with you.

*People* **And with thy spirit.**

*Deacon* Lift up your hearts.

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

*Deacon* Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

*People* **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet and right, always and everywhere,  
with our whole heart and mind and voice to praise thee,  
the invisible, almighty, and eternal God,  
and thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
who paid for us the debt of Adam's sin,  
and by his blood hath delivered thy faithful people;  
for he is the true Paschal Lamb, the very Lamb of God,  
whose blood doth mark the doorposts of believers  
and make us holy.

This is the night when thou didst 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  
thou didst banish 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 thy mercy and loving kindness to us,  
that to redeem a slave, thou gavest 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 restoreth innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn.  
It casteth out pride and hatred, and bringeth 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 thy 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 giveth his light to all creation,  
and who liveth and reigneth, world without end. **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 hath 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)<sup>v</sup> or

A SONG OF CREATION (*Supplemental Canticle 10*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

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

### THE FALL

GENESIS 3

PSALM 32

Let us pray. *Silence*

O God, who didst send thy blessed Son, the seed of the woman, that he might crush the head of the serpent and make all things

new: Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto 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, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ, so by the continual mortifying of our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that, through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, the same thy 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 hearkened unto thy call, and rejoiced to see the day of thy Son: Multiply, we beseech thee, the number of thy children by the grace of the Lamb that was slain; that thy Church may also rejoice to see thy 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; who by the power of thine own mighty arm once deliveredst thy 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, who didst lead thine ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant, we beseech thee, that we, who serve thee now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where every tear shall be wiped away, and where thy saints for ever sing thy praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SALVATION OFFERED FREELY TO ALL

ISAIAH 55:1-11

SURELY, IT IS GOD WHO DOTHS SAVE ME (*Supplemental Canticle 8*)  
or PSALM 42:1-7

Let us pray. *Silence*



O God, who didst create all things by the power of thy Word, and who renewest the face of the earth by the outpouring of thy Spirit: Grant, we pray thee, the water of life to those who thirst for thee, that they may bring forth abundant fruit in thy 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 DOTHS SAVE ME (*Supplemental Canticle 8*)

Let us pray. *Silence*

Heavenly Father, who by the power of thy Holy Spirit dost promise unto thy faithful people regeneration in the water of Baptism: Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit, that we who are born again may serve thee in faith and love, and grow into the full stature of thy 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, who speakest the word to thy scattered people, and dost raise us up from the valley of death: Vouchsafe to breathe thy Spirit upon thy Church, that we may live and stand before thee confident in thy 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, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant unto us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

JONAH AND THE FISH

JONAH 1:1—2:10

PSALM 130

Let us pray. *Silence*

Almighty God, who by the Passover of thy Son hast brought us out of sin into righteousness, and out of death into life: Grant to those who are sealed by thy Holy Spirit the will and the power to proclaim thee unto 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, who hast called thy Church to bear witness that thou wast in Christ reconciling the world unto thyself: Give us boldness, we beseech thee, to proclaim the good news of thy love, that all who hear it may be drawn unto thee; through him

who was lifted high upon the Cross, even 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 upon thy whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; and by the tranquil operation of thy providence, carry out the work of man's 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 renewed unto the perfection of him through whom all things were made, thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **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 be to God on high,  
and on earth peace, good will towards men.  
We praise thee, we bless thee,  
we worship thee, we glorify thee,  
we give thanks to thee for thy great glory,**

O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.  
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;  
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer.  
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,  
have mercy upon us.  
For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord;  
thou only, O Christ,  
with the Holy Ghost,  
art most high 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, who dost illumine this most holy night with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up, we beseech thee, in thy Church that Spirit of adoption which is given unto us in Baptism, that we, being regenerate both in body and soul, may render unto thee a pure service; through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.  
**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 be to thee, Lord Christ.**

MATTHEW 28:1-10

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

The Gospel of the Lord.

*People* **Praise be to thee, 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, through 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 Ghost, be amongst 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 thy 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 says*

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.**