

# Easter Vigil

April 3, 2021

## THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

The Great Vigil of Easter comes to us from the earliest celebration in the Church of the death and resurrection of our Lord, known as “Pascha.” When this celebration began to be spread over several days, the Vigil of Easter was conducted as a watch through the night for signs of the rising dawn. Ideally the service should start after sundown on Saturday and continue through the night, concluding with the Lord’s Supper at sunrise. Also, the rubrics call for the service to begin outside of the church, preferably around a fire, from which the congregation lights candles and processes into the nave. For obvious reasons, we will conduct the Vigil a bit differently, as noted in the Order of Service below.

The Great Vigil of Easter is comprised of six parts: the Services of Light, of Readings, of Holy Baptism, of Prayer, of the Word, and of the Sacrament. These are unified under the theme of the resurrection of our Lord and the restoration of creation in His new Kingdom. The vigil begins in silence and darkness.

## THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

*The congregation gathers in the parish hall.*

*All are given a candle, to be lighted from the paschal candle.*

*In semidarkness a fire is kindled.*

## INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

## PRAYER

P: Beloved in the Lord, on this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, we are gathered here in vigil and prayer. This is the Passover of the Lord in which, by hearing His Word and celebrating His Sacraments, we share in His victory over death.

Let us pray. O God, You are like a refiner’s fire, and Your Spirit enkindles the hearts of Your faithful people with the fire of Your love. Bless, we implore You, this new flame and those who keep this joyful Easter festival that, burning with desire for life with You, we may be found rightly prepared to share in the Feast of Light which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

*Lighting the candle from the newly kindled fire, the pastor says:*

P: May the light of Christ, who is risen in glory from the dead, scatter all the darkness of our hearts and minds.

Let us pray. Almighty and most merciful God, pour out on us Your abundant blessing that all who in true faith share this night in joyful celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead may be filled with your heavenly benediction. Once we were in darkness, but now we are in the Light, even Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

*All light their candles from the paschal candle and then follow the candle bearer in procession into the darkened church.*

*At three different points along the procession, the procession stops and the following is said:*

P: The light of Christ.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **EASTER PROCLAMATION**      *Exsultet*

P: Rejoice now, all you heav'nly choirs of angels; rejoice now, all creation; sound forth trumpet of salvation, and proclaim the triumph of our King.

Rejoice too, all the earth, in the radiance of the light now poured upon you and made brilliant by the brightness of the everlasting King; know that the ancient darkness has been forever banished.

Rejoice, O Church of Christ, clothed in the brightness of this light; let all this house of God ring out with rejoicing, with praises of all God's faithful people.

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

**C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places, with all our heart and mind and voice, praise You, O Lord, Holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, and Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. For He is the very Paschal Lamb who offered Himself for the sin of the world, who has cleansed us by the shedding of His precious blood. This is the night when You brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt and led them through the Red Sea on dry ground. This is the night when all who believe in Christ are delivered from bondage to sin and are restored to life and immortality. This is the night when Christ, the Life, arose from the dead. The seal of the grave is broken and the morning of the new creation breaks forth out of night. Oh, how wonderful and beyond all telling is Your mercy toward us, O God, that to redeem a slave You gave Your Son. How holy is this night when all wickedness is put to flight and sin is washed away. How holy is this night when innocence is restored to the fallen and joy is given to those downcast. How blessed is this night

when man is reconciled to God in Christ. Holy Father, accept now the evening sacrifices of our thanksgiving and praise. Let Christ, the true light and morning star, shine in our hearts, He who gave light to all creation, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

*The congregation extinguishes their candles and are seated.*

*A few lights may be turned on.*

## **THE SERVICE OF READINGS**

P: In this most holy night our Savior, Christ, the Lord, broke the power of death and by His resurrection brought life and salvation to all creation. Let us praise the Lord, for He truly keeps His Word. The sun of righteousness has dawned upon us who have sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

### **THE CREATION**

Genesis 1:1-2:3

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.** *silence*

P: Let us pray. Almighty God, through Your Word and Spirit You most wonderfully created all things, and through the Word made flesh You brought new life to fallen humanity. Grant that in Your mercy we may be conformed to the image of Him who shares fully in our humanity, even Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **THE FLOOD**

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

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.** *silence*

P: Let us pray. O Lord, You kill and You raise to life; You brought the Flood upon a wicked and perverse generation, and yet You saved faithful Noah and his family in the ark. Keep us in safety in the ark of Christ's body, the Church, that Your mercy may come to its fullness and Your salvation be preached to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **THE TESTING OF ABRAHAM**

Genesis 22:1-18

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.** *silence*

P: Let us pray. O God, since You promised faithful Abraham that he would be the father of a great multitude, You provided a substitute for his son Isaac. In the fullness of time, You sent Your Son, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, to lay down His life that we might live as faithful children of Abraham. Grant to all people a living trust in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

## ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE

Exodus 4:10 – 15:1

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.** *silence*

P: Let us pray. O God, You once delivered Your people Israel from bondage under Pharaoh and led them by a pillar of cloud and fire through the sea to safety. Grant that we may so follow Christ that through the waters of Baptism we may daily die and rise with Him and walk in safety through the wilderness of this life until we see Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

## THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3:1-30

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.** *silence*

P: Let us pray. O God, Your Son protected faithful Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace of the king. Grant us protection in our time of testing that we would boldly confess Your name, reject all false worship, and live and die in confidence, knowing that we are safe; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

**HYMN:** *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* LSB 790

## THE SERVICE OF HOLY BAPTISM

P: On this holiest of nights the whole Church of our Lord Jesus Christ recalls His death and burial, rejoicing with great joy in the Gospel of His glorious and mighty resurrection from the dead. The apostle Paul says:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:3-11*)

## FLOOD PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, according to Your strict judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all.

You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led Your people Israel through the water on dry ground, foreshadowing this washing of Your Holy Baptism.

Through the Baptism in the Jordan of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, You sanctified and instituted all waters to be a blessed flood and a lavish washing away of sin.

We pray that You would behold us according to Your boundless mercy and bless us with true faith by the Holy Spirit, that through this saving flood all sin in us, which we have inherited from Adam and which we ourselves have committed since, would be drowned and die.

Grant that we be kept safe and secure in the holy Ark of the Christian Church, being separated from the multitude of unbelievers and serving Your name at all times with a fervent spirit and a joyful hope, so that, with all believers in Your promise, we would be declared worthy of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

P: Do you renounce the devil?

**C: Yes, I renounce him.**

P: Do you renounce all his works?

**C: Yes, I renounce them.**

P: Do you renounce all his ways?

**C: I do renounce them.**

P: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

**C: Yes, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

P: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son?

**C: Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day, He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

P: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**C: Yes, I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life ☩ everlasting.**

P: Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given you the new birth of water and the Spirit and has forgiven you all your sins, strengthen you with His grace to life ☩ everlasting.

**C: Amen.**

P: Peace ☩ be with you.

**C: Amen.**

**HYMN:**        *I Bind unto Myself Today*

LSB 604

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*The congregation will not be ushered out this evening.*

*You are welcome to stay as long as you desire.*

*We will recess until 6:30 a.m. when the Vigil continues with the Services of Prayer, of the Word,  
and of the Sacrament.*

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