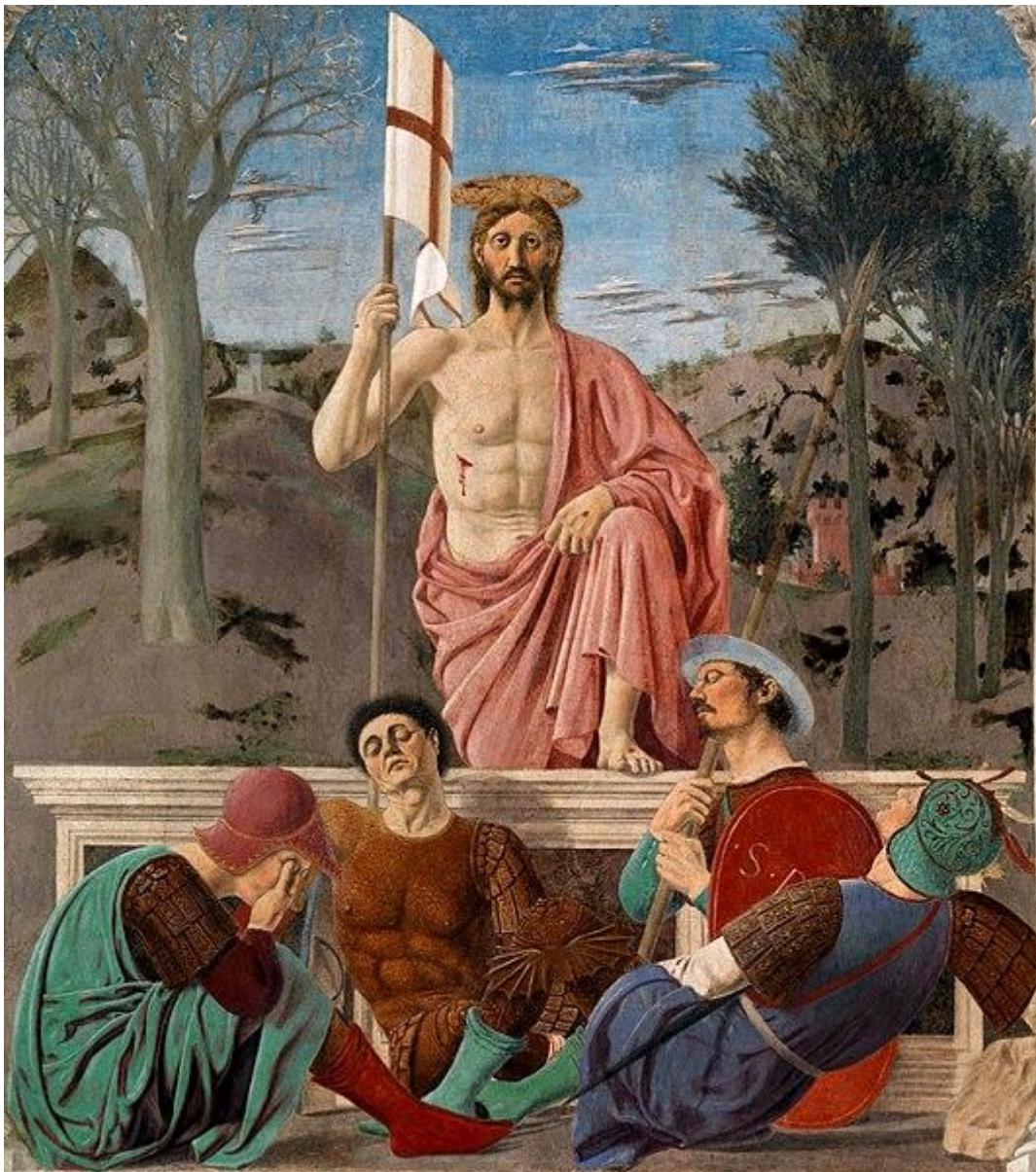




The EASTER VIGIL

A resource for praying at home



This holy night, on which we keep the Easter Vigil, is a night of joy as love triumphs definitively over death. To the night belongs the most beautiful celebration of the Church year. The liturgy is celebrated after nightfall on Holy Saturday. Out of the darkness and silence, comes the light of the Easter fire and the Paschal candle, we rejoice as we hear the Exsultet and as the Church sings alleluia, and the refreshment of the waters in which we renew our baptismal vows.

Celebrating Easter may be hard for us this year. But through the centuries, Christians have rejoiced amid hardship. Sister Mary David writes in The Joy of God: "joy in tribulation has been one of the most striking things about our faith". She writes: "In creating and reconciling the world through his Son, God has given us everything. Christians are called to live in joy and to communicate joy, the joy of communion in the one body of Christ, the joy of believing, joy in midst of suffering, joy in spite of suffering. There is no virtue, no circumstances, that is not to be illumined by joy."

So if you can, please celebrate, in whatever way possible. Share and communicate your joy, even if that has to be on the phone this year.

THE INTRODUCTION

You may wish to be selective in the Vigil Readings, but the Exodus 14 reading should be among those that you choose. Perhaps begin in low light, say with just a lamp. Have a unlit candle ready. Then read this greeting:

ON THIS MOST SACRED NIGHT, in which our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, the Church calls upon her sons and daughters, scattered throughout the world, to come together to watch and pray. If we keep the memorial of the Lord's paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God. Amen.

Light the candle and say:

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

Say this short version of the Exsultet (or play a recording of the full Exsultet if you can):

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

O Universe, dance around God's throne!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Sound the victorious trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in glory,

revealing the splendour of your creation,

radiant in the brightness of your triumphant King!

Christ has conquered! Now his life and glory fill you!

Darkness vanishes for ever!

Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!

The risen Saviour, our Lord of life, shines upon you!

Let all God's people sing and shout for joy.

THE LITURGY OF READINGS

The readings are introduced:

NOW THAT WE HAVE BEGUN our solemn Vigil, let us listen with quiet hearts to the Word of God. Let us meditate on how God in times past saved his people and in these, the last days, has sent us his Son as our Redeemer. Let us pray that our God may complete this paschal work of salvation by the fullness of redemption.

THE FIRST READING – THE CREATION

Read: Genesis 1.1-2.4a

Then say the collect: Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

SECOND READING – CROSSING THE RED SEA

Read: Exodus 14.10- 15.18

Then say the collect: Lord God our redeemer, who heard the cry of your people and sent your servant Moses to lead them out of slavery: free us from the tyranny of sin and death and, by the leading of your Spirit, bring us to our promised land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIRD READING – ON THE NEW JERUSALEM

Read: Isaiah 54.5-14

Then say the collect: Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

FOURTH READING – ON A NEW HEART AND NEW SPIRIT

Read: Ezekiel 36.16-18

Then say the collect: Heavenly Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit you give to 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, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit now and for ever. Amen.

Then, as the say (or sing to a setting you know!) the Gloria, turning on full the lights if they were dimmed, ringing any bells or instruments you might have to hand:

Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

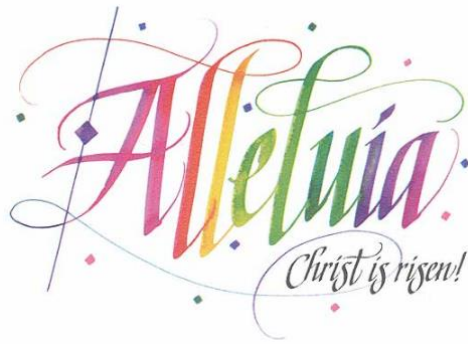
We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

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.

Then pray:

O GOD, WHO MAKE this most sacred night radiant
with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection,
stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption,
so that, renewed in body and mind,
we may render you undivided service.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.



With joy, we greet the Gospel, saying these words from Ps 117:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.
Let the sons of Israel say: "His love has no end".

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The Lord's right hand has triumphed; his right hand raised me up. I shall not die, I shall live and recount his deeds.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Then we read the Easter Gospel from Matthew 28:1-10

AFTER THE SABBATH, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And all at once there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him." Now I have told you.' Filled

with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. "Greetings" he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there."



The women at the tomb were filled with awe and great joy; let us with joy sing God's praises:

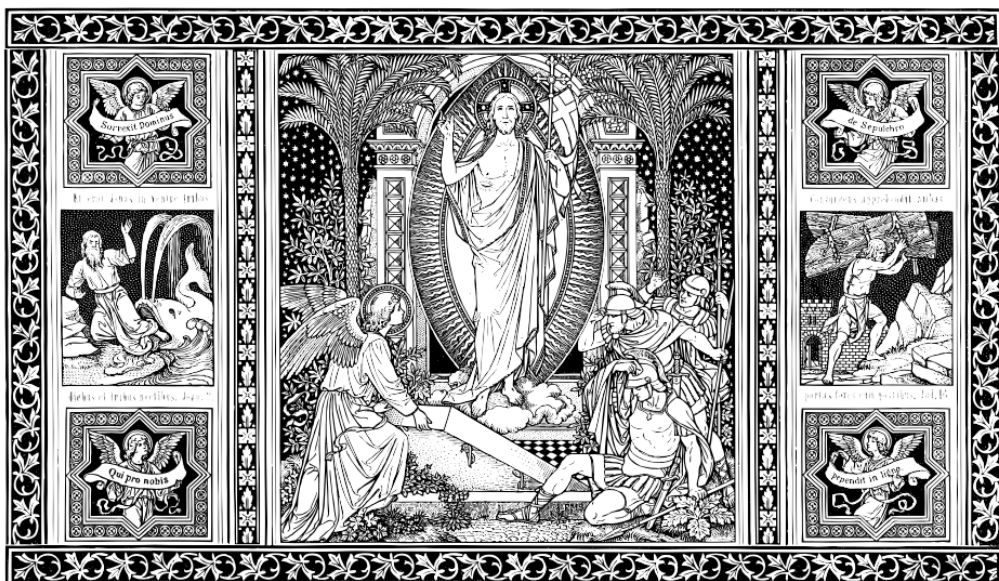
1. Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness;
God hath brought His Israel
Into joy from sadness;
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke
Jacob's sons and daughters;
Led them with unmoistened foot
Through the Red Sea waters.

2. 'Tis the spring of souls to-day:
Christ hath burst His prison,
And from three days' sleep in death
As a sun hath risen;
All the winter of our sins,
Long and dark, is flying
From his light, to whom we give
Laud and praise undying.

3. Now the queen of seasons, bright
With the day of splendour,
With the royal feast of feasts,
Comes its joy to render;
Comes to glad Jerusalem,
Who with true affection
Welcomes in unwearied strains
Jesu's Resurrection.

4. Neither might the gates of death,
Nor the tomb's dark portal,
Nor the watchers, nor the seal,
Hold thee as a mortal;
But today amidst thine own
Thou didst stand, bestowing
That thy peace which evermore
Passeth human knowing.

S. John of Damascus c.750
translated by John Mason Neale (1818–1866)



AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

At the Easter Vigil we would renew our baptism vows. In the absence of this rite, spend some time giving thanks for your baptism and for those people who have taught you the faith.

If you can, you might listen to the traditional chant Vidi Aquam:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XImCWG8EYTI>

The words in English are:

I saw water flowing out of the Temple,
From its right side, Alleluia:
And all who came to this water were saved,
And they shall say: Alleluia, Alleluia.

Then say out loud the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and 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;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Say the OUR FATHER.

Then make your act of SPIRITUAL COMMUNION. Spend a moment meditating on how Christ's victory over death has transformed and renewed the whole of creation. Longing to be united with him in our dying to sin and in resurrection to new and eternal life, say this prayer:

MY JESUS,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself
wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

Spend some time in silence, giving thanks, and then say:

Blessed, praised and adored be Jesus Christ on his throne of
glory in Heaven, and in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Say this concluding prayer:

On this most holy night, Lord God,
you opened for us the way to eternal life
through your only Son's victory over death.

Grant that as we celebrate the feast of his resurrection
we may be renewed by your Holy Spirit
and rise again in the light of life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

And then pray for God's blessing, saying:

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to
everlasting life.

Amen.

Let us praise the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

