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## The Easter Vigil - 8 April 2023

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# 8 April 2023

## The Easter Vigil

Reflection by Angela Marquis

### **Easter Vigil - Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation** by Vincent Glynn

The usual and most appropriate time for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation is the Easter Vigil.

The third step in the Christian Initiation of Adults is the celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist. Through this final step the elect, receiving pardon for their sins are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fullness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God' (RCIA 23, 198, 199).

Those who have been fully initiated are now called neophytes. They will enter the final period of the RCIA, the period of post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy. (RCIA 234).

### **Introduction**

The Easter Vigil is the Church's night of nights, when the sin of Adam and Eve is redeemed through Christ's triumphant resurrection. The Church recalls the power of God throughout history, proclaiming God's saving grace, compassion and eternal love for all creation. Let us prepare to immerse ourselves in Easter joy.

### **Collect**

*The Oration*

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, God for ever and ever.

This wonderful collect can only suffer from over commentary. It is truly a vigil prayer, since in the 'radiant night' we see the dark give way to light. The glory of the resurrection is such that it overcomes all things, and even makes the night sacred. The light is here and now, and we are in its midst! The petition we seek is that God arouse us, stir us up. What follows is a theology of baptism, since it is the consequences of baptism that God is petitioned to bring to the fore. At the centre of the petition is the 'spirit of adoption': the baptised are the adopted daughters and sons of God (Romans 8:17). In this, the oration addresses both those about to be baptised, and those who are to renew their baptismal vows. As adopted in the Spirit, our entire selves are renewed, bodily and spiritually. Our response is simple: undivided service in worship and action. The renewal of creation has begun! Indeed, 'this is the night'.

### **Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

## **First Reading**

### **Genesis 1:1-2:2**

In the beginning, before God's creative genesis, the world was a formless void, and *ruach Elohim*, the Spirit of God, hovered. Then there was light. All creation came into being and God saw that it was very good.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 103(104):1-2, 5-6,12-14,24, 35**

*Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.*

The creative genesis of God is at its most powerful in this psalm. The earth and all it holds are clothed in the majesty of God.

## **Second Reading**

### **Genesis 22:1-18**

The promise to Abraham that he will father a great nation does not prevent him from trusting in God. Abraham's faith is tested, and God's mercy redeems.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 15(16):5, 8-11**

*Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.*

The psalmist proclaims a deep longing and steadfast love for God. The Lord will always guide and always protect.

## Third Reading

### Exodus 14:15-15:1

The Lord leads Moses and the Israelites dry shod through the sea – walls of water rise up on each side. This night God delivers them from bondage to freedom.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Canticle: Exodus 15

*Let us sing to the Lord, he has covered himself in glory.*

Miriam, Moses and Aaron lead the Israelites in song with tambourine and drums, rejoicing in God's saving power – horse and rider are thrown into the sea.

[Note: This psalm begins without introduction directly flowing on from the reading. It is best to have the cantor of the psalm read the reading as well.]

## Fourth Reading

### Isaiah 54:5-14

God weds Israel – embracing, forgiving, with everlasting love, offering the scattered peoples a firm foundation on which to build.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 29(30):2, 4-6, 11-13

*I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.*

The psalmist sings the praises of the Holy One of Israel.

## Fifth Reading

### Isaiah 55:1-11

Turn back to the Lord and return to love. Spend money only on simple things and rely upon God for real sustenance. God's ways and thoughts are above all.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Canticle: Isaiah 12

*You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.*

Trust in God sings the psalmist, for the Lord is our strength and our song.

## Sixth Reading

### Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

Israel has lost her way and wanders aimlessly in a foreign land. Turn back says the Lord, seek wisdom, seek truth, and seek God.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 18(19):8-11

*Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.*

The law, the precepts and fear of the Lord are perfect, right, and holy. All should be desired more than gold.

## Seventh Reading

### Ezekiel 36:16-17,18-28

God has scattered the House of Israel but will now call them back. Clean water will be poured over them and they will be cleansed. The Lord says, 'You will be my people and I shall be your God.'

## Responsorial Psalm

***Note: in the English speaking world, if there is no baptism, Psalm 41(42) is used. If there is a baptism, either Isaiah 12 or Psalm 50(51) MUST be used instead.***

### Psalm 41(42):

*Like a deer that yearns for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.*

The psalmist thirsts for the God of Israel, to be taken to the holy mountain and the place where God dwells.

**Isaiah 12** – see above

### Psalm 50(51):

*Be merciful O Lord, for we have sinned.*

Create in us a new heart O God, for we offer you a contrite spirit.

## Epistle

### Romans 6:3-11

St Paul recognises that the death of Christ is the destruction of all death – baptised into this mystery, death no longer has power over us, for we die to ourselves and our sin, to be reborn in Christ.

## Responsorial Psalm

**Psalm 117(118):1-2, 16-17, 22-23**

*Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.*

The Lord is good, God's love is never ending. The stone rejected by the builder becomes the cornerstone.

## Gospel Reading

**Matthew 28:1-10**

The women journey to the tomb, but find the stone rolled away. The Lord is risen and goes before them to Galilee.

## Reflection

The ground is soft beneath our feet, and slightly damp with evening dew. The air is cool, the sound of wind ghosting through the trees is echoed by the crackle of the fire. Flames dance like autumn leaves and smoke curls away, dissolving into the night like a memory. Night waits, breathing silently, listening.

The uncertainty of our final hours with Jesus, the pain of reliving his tortured death, transforms into longing, yearning, for the mystery to unfold. From the blaze of the fire, the Easter candle sparks to life, initiating the solemn procession. Tapers are gradually lit. The church flickers with an intimate warmth. 'Exult, let them exult!' We ready ourselves for the Word of God, immersing ourselves in the mythos, the mystery and the mysticism of the Easter Vigil.

I have had the honour and privilege of proclaiming the Exsultet on Holy Saturday many times. It is an extraordinary experience to look down upon the glow of upturned and expectant faces, bathed in candlelight. There is no other moment like this. As I cross the altar to ascend the steps to the pulpit, my thoughts are with the women of the Resurrection, women whose hearts were filled with sorrow and fear, whose footsteps went unnoticed because they were women, whose intent was to look after the body of their friend, to keep it safe, to mourn and to grieve. Yet, they did not find what they were looking for – the body of Jesus was no longer there.

The root of the word Hebrew (*ivri*) is *avar*, meaning to pass over or pass through. Although the Israelites do not refer to themselves with this name in the scriptures, a Hebrew might literally be one who has passed over or passed through. Many of the readings tonight illuminate this journey from one life to another, passing through the liminal space where God's creative presence is at work. Once there was darkness and then there was light (Gen. 1:1-3), Isaac's sacrifice transformed into God's saving grace, (22:1-18), and the Israelites delivered from slavery into freedom (Ex. 14:15 – 15:1). Isaiah recalls the covenant and prophecies, the movement of God, from anger to forgiveness, from hidden face to pity (54:5-14). The Word of God to Ezekiel

promises a heart of flesh to replace the heart of stone – a new spirit, a new covenant. These narratives move us from fear to hope, death to life, sadness to joy.

On a more scholarly level, the Paschal Triduum moves seamlessly between a cataphatic and apophatic theology. The former ‘acknowledges what is visible, imaged, apparent ... [while the latter] points to what is beyond word and image, invisible, mysterious, ineffable.’<sup>1</sup> On Holy Thursday, the embodied Jesus washes the feet of his friends (John 13:5), instructs them in his Eucharistic gift (Matt. 26:26-28) and, while a friend betrays him (John 13:21-30), he pleads in anguish to have this cup taken from him (Matt. 26:36-46). On Good Friday, after enduring the abandonment of his friends, whipped, mocked, and scourged, Jesus embodies love with his total gift of self on the Cross. The third movement of the Triduum is the dawning of Christ – the physical cataphatic presence of Jesus becomes the eternal Christ in the apophatic silence of the empty tomb.

In Matthew, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary, search for the physical yet lifeless presence of their beloved friend and teacher, Jesus, visible, imaged, apparent. The silent, empty tomb is beyond their comprehension. Here Jesus remains invisible, mysterious, ineffable. Year A’s Resurrection narrative, however, is the only one in which Jesus actually appears. In Mark, the women run from the tomb afraid, in Luke, the women tell the disciples but are not believed, and in John’s account, proclaimed every Easter morning, the Gospel stops short of Jesus’ first appearance to Mary who believes him to be the gardener (20:15).

Matthew’s account of the Resurrection is not a peaceful one. Just as the veil of the Tabernacle was torn in two at the precise moment of Jesus’ death (27:51), the sepulchre where his body lay was split at his resurrection. A violent earthquake unveils the angel of the Lord who rolls away the stone and sits upon it with a face of lightning. The imagery is shattering, violent and terrifying, a face split like the sky in a thunderstorm. The ruptured entrance reveals what may have appeared to the women, a desolate void. Yet, like the ‘darkness over the deep’ (Gen. 1:2), God’s Spirit, *ruach Elohim*, is hovering. The heavenly creature, whose presence terrifies and mutes the guards, so that they become ‘like dead men’ (28:4), counsels the women not to be afraid (28:5). For the women, this too is a liminal moment. The fear and trepidation felt as they walked towards the tomb has been transformed into a glimmer of hope, much like the flicker of candlelight as the Exsultet is sung. The angel concludes, ‘Now I have told you’ (28.7), completing the story as did Jesus from the Cross days earlier, ‘it is finished’ (John 19:30). Mary of Magdala and the other Mary did not need to see Jesus to believe. ‘Filled with awe and great joy’ they go to search for the disciples (Matt. 28:8).

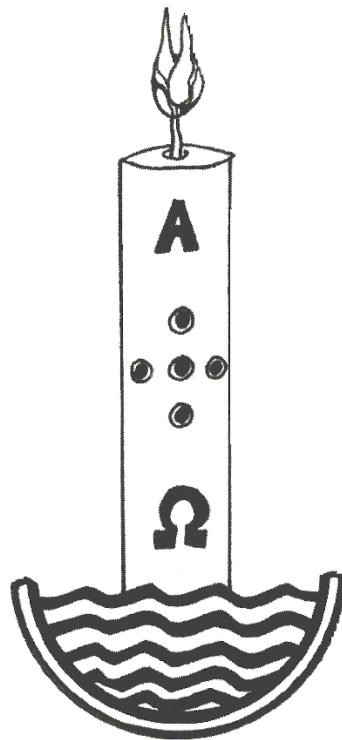
The women of the Resurrection, bowed down in their grief as they head towards the tomb, pass through the cataphatic stories of Jesus to the apophatic presence of God, moving from the apparent to the mystical. Wordlessly they clasp Jesus’ feet, as he echoes the angel, instructing them to bear witness to the Resurrection, to

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<sup>1</sup> Mudge, P. (2009). ‘Towards a reclaimed framework of “knowing” ...’. In M. de Souza et al. (Eds.). *International handbook of education for spirituality, care and wellbeing*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Academic Publishers. (pp. 611-629).

proclaim the Good News and to become the voices of Easter joy. As the bells ring and the Gloria is proclaimed, St Paul reminds us that we too have passed through the liminal space of the tomb, so to be resurrected in Christ. Jesus has risen, he is reborn from the dead! The vigil is witness to Jesus' body, blood, service, betrayal, denial and death passing through, as the Israelites once passed through the sea, towards the promise of new life.

This night, Jesus comes towards us as we run to meet him, echoing the voice of the angel: 'Do not be afraid,' for I am here with you.



*We ask God  
to pour out  
the Holy Spirit  
on the newly  
baptised.*



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

With exultation and joy we proclaim that Christ is risen, and that through him we can now offer our prayers to the Father.

## Petitions

We pray for the Church, joyful witness to the resurrection of the Lord. May all Christians who gather in celebration and wonder this night carry the light of the resurrection into the world.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the political and economic leaders of our world. May they promote peace and reconciliation among all peoples and nations, and justly assist those who have experienced natural disasters.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those baptised this night in this parish and throughout the Church and for those received into full communion in the Catholic Church and confirmed with the gift of the Spirit. May they live the joy of the gospel and witness to the resurrection.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all Christians who this night celebrate the triumph of life over death; may they announce the victory of Christ over evil as the women did after Jesus said, 'Do not be afraid.'

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the safety of all travellers at this holiday time that through patience and courtesy they remain free of trauma.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of all parishioners and for those who have died and now share in the victory of Christ.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Father, you have already granted us more than we can ask for in the resurrection of Christ. As you answer our prayers through the power of the Spirit, make us ever more faithful to him who is Lord forever and ever.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

### The Easter Vigil (8 April 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
<b><i>Liturgy of Baptism: Processional antiphon</i></b>						
We come to you, Lord Jesus (Verdi)				279a		
We come to you, Lord Jesus (Hutchings)				279b		
<b><i>Litany of the Saints</i></b>						
Litany of the saints					131	
<b><i>Blessing of water</i></b>						
Springs of water				282a		
Springs of water, bless the Lord				282b	337, 338	344
<b><i>Acclamations after baptisms</i></b>						
Blessed be God, who chose you (Hutchings)				283a		
Blessed be God, who chose you (Willcock)				283b		
Rejoice, you newly baptized				283f		
You are God's work of art				283e		
You have put on Christ (Hughes)				283c		
You have put on Christ (ICEL)				105		
You have put on Christ (Jones)				283d		345
<b><i>Renewal of baptismal promises</i></b>						
This is our faith				286c	109	348
<b><i>Song during sprinkling</i></b>						
Cleanse us, Lord (Mews)				543		
Cleanse us, Lord (Verdi)				544		
I saw water flowing					29	
If we have died to ourselves in Jesus					30	87
You springs and all that moves					31	
Springs of living water					32	
<b><i>Presentation of the gifts</i></b>						
Alleluia No. 1	15				350	360
Easter alleluia						358
Keep in mind	180			730	530	391
Now the green blade rises		131		756	363	364
O sons and daughters				778	349	359
Surrexit Christus, alleluia!					365	
<b><i>Communion Processional</i></b>						
All you nations				616	347	353
By your kingly power				633	352	352
Christ is alive, with joy we sing				639	353	365
This joyful Eastertide				845		
Through the Red Sea brought at last					342	

<b>Dismissal</b>						
Go in the peace of Christ				288		
Easter dismissal					339, 340	349
<b>Recessional song</b>						
Christ the Lord is risen again				646	354	
Christ the Lord is risen today				647		361
Easter glory fills the sky				671		
Jesus Christ is ris'n today					360	
Jesus is risen			82			
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son					368	
This day was made by the Lord					369	
<b>Title</b>	<b>S&amp;S2</b>					
<b>Recessional song</b>						
Glory in the cross	313					
Join in the dance	321					

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

### First Reading

Psalm 103: *Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.*

	CWB	GA	JOBF	LPSF	PM
Psalm 103	267	63	pg. 12	pg. 32	pg. 82

### First Reading (alternative psalm)

Psalm 32: *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*

	CWB	LPSF
Psalm 32	268	pg. 36

### Second Reading

Psalm 15: *Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.*

	CWB	JOBF	LPSF
Psalm 15	269	pg.14	pg. 38

### Third Reading

Exodus 15: *Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself with glory.*

	CWB	GA	JOBF	LPSF	PM
Exodus 15	270	340	pg. 16	pg. 42	pg. 112

**Fourth Reading**

Psalm 29: *I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.*

	CWB	GA	JOBF	LPSF
Psalm 29	271	29	pg. 18	pg. 46

**Fifth Reading**

Isaiah 12: *You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.*

	CWB	GA	JOBF	LPSF
Isaiah 12	272, 603	341	pg. 20	pg. 49

**Sixth Reading**

Psalm 18: *Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.*

	CWB	JOBF	LPSF	PM
Psalm 18	273	pg. 22	pg. 52	pg. 6

**Seventh Reading**

Psalm 41: *Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.*

	CWB	JOBF	LPSF
Psalm 41	274	pg. 24	pg. 54

**Seventh Reading (alternative psalm)**

Psalm 50: *Create a clean heart in me, O Lord.*

	CWB	JOBF	LPSF	PM
Psalm 50	275, 596b	pg. 26	pg. 58	pg. 44

**Gospel Acclamation**

Psalm 117: *Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

	CWB	GA	JOBF	LPA	PM
Psalm 117	277	70	pg. 28	pg. 46	pg. 92

**Music selections by Michael Mangan**

**Live in the light** (TWB) [Procession of the Paschal Candle]

**This Is the day** (LCC) *Ps 117/118* [Children's Lectionary]

**At the tomb** (TWML) [Gifts]

**Easter alleluia** (TT/SYJ) [Recessional]

**This is the day** (FWS) *Based on Ps 117/118* [Recessional]

**Litany of mercy** (DOM) *Based on Ps 136* [Gifts]