
The Saturday Easter Vigil:

The Lighting of the Paschal Candle

The service begins after sundown outside in total darkness. A new fire is kindled. Then the new Paschal Candle is blessed and lit. It symbolizes the Light of Christ, as well as his unending Resurrection Life. It is the candle which normally stands by the baptismal font, also a symbol of dying and rising with Christ into new and unending life.

Once the Paschal Candle is lit, its flame is shared with all the gathered faithful, who light their taper candles from its flame. The Exsultet, or Easter Proclamation, is chanted or read. It recounts the importance of the night:

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

The Liturgy of the Word

Then, in the candlelit darkness, lessons begin. The lessons can vary, but traditionally the story of the Israelites fleeing Egypt and crossing the parted Red Sea is always included. The readings tell the story of God’s salvation of his chosen people and quote from the ancient prophets who foretold the coming of the Savior.

Musical Reflections (to be played during as you read):

Jesus Loves Me (arr. William Bolcom): <https://youtu.be/SxqD6Feg3Cw>

The Book of Sounds: <https://youtu.be/U5310fFktbU>

Meditation: <https://go.aws/2K8gSCp>

The Readings:

Genesis 1:1-2:2 - The Story of Creation

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

Genesis 22:1-18 - Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac

Exodus 14:10-15:1 - Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea

Isaiah 4:2-6 - God's Presence in a renewed Israel

Isaiah 55:1-11 - Salvation offered freely to all

Ezekiel 36:24-28 - A new heart and a new spirit

Ezekiel 37:1-14 - The valley of dry bones

Zephaniah 3:12-20 - The gathering of God's people

Creative Opportunity:

What hymns would YOU choose to accompany each reading? [Let us know!](#)

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows

After the lessons, any candidates for Baptism are presented. In the midst of the gathered faithful, they take their baptismal vows and then the whole assembly renews their Baptismal Covenant with them.

The congregation prays for them as we process to the Baptistry, where a baptismal pool is prepared. Symbols are so very important at the Easter Vigil, so they are often big and powerful. The baptismal pool makes a resounding statement about the spiritual washing that takes place in the Sacrament of Baptism.

After the baptismal waters have been blessed, the candidates are immersed three-times in the Name of the Trinity.

Each candidate is blessed, sometimes by donning a white robe, then is given a baptismal candle, lit from the flame of the Paschal Candle, with the words:

“Receive the Light of Christ.”

The First Eucharist of Easter

Then there is a loud noise in the darkness, reminiscent of the sound of the stone being rolled away from the entry to Jesus’ tomb, and everyone rings bells and proclaims joyously as we celebrate the moment of Resurrection. Lights are now illuminated and the candles at the altar are lit. Then the Gospel reading, telling the story of the first Easter morning, is told.

Mark 16:1-18

Romans 8:18-25, 31-38

For the Eucharistic Prayer, everyone is invited to gather around the altar, and at Communion the newly baptized receive Holy Communion for the very first time.

After Communion, the people are blessed and sent out to live lives empowered and transformed by the Resurrection.