

# The Great Vigil of Easter

## The Liturgy of Easter Eve



We welcome you to the Church of the Ascension and to this service. We hope that this celebration of the Lord's resurrection is a meaningful part of your observance of Holy Week and Easter.

Although it is now much more common for people to go to church on Easter Day, this was not always so. The Easter Eve service is the most ancient Easter celebration of the Church. Long before Christmas was even considered as a holy day, Christians were meeting before dawn to celebrate the Lord's passion, death and resurrection. At one time the whole of what we now call Holy Week was commemorated during this service. Our spiritual ancestors began the Vigil in the darkness of night to recall the darkness of death, and by the time the Vigil and Eucharist were finished, the sun had risen, a sign of new life.

Over the centuries the liturgy evolved, the other days of Holy Week took their separate celebrations, and the Easter Vigil became focused on the resurrection. Still Christians gathered in darkness, and then a fire was lit. Fire is the universal symbol of life, and from that fire the Paschal Candle was lit and then each person took a flame. The story of salvation was rehearsed, the resurrection was proclaimed, and the Eucharist, not celebrated since Thursday evening, was celebrated again with great thanksgiving.

By the early third century, this service was also closely associated with baptism, and it became the normal time for the admission of new Christians into the Church. This is because of the close association in Christian understanding between baptism and Jesus' death and resurrection. When we are baptized, we become participants in Jesus' death and resurrection, and this was once powerfully symbolized when baptismal candidates descended into the baptismal pool (as if it were death), were baptized, and ascended to be clothed in white (as if to be resurrected).

Notable in this service is the Paschal or Easter Candle. "Paschal" is simply another word for Easter, and it comes from the Greek word *pascha*, which means "Passover." For Easter is the Christian Passover. Indeed, this service is properly called the "Paschal Vigil." The Paschal Candle is both a sign of resurrection and a sign of the presence of the risen Christ himself. It remains in a prominent position in the church throughout the fifty-day Easter Season until Pentecost, when it is placed near the baptismal font. Because of its close association with Easter and baptism, the Paschal Candle is used throughout the year at baptisms and funerals.

O God, you have searched the depths  
we cannot know,  
and touched what we cannot bear to name:  
may we so wait, enclosed in your darkness,  
with Jesus Christ.

*Amen.*



# The Great Vigil and the First Eucharist of Easter

**President:** The Rev. Peter Doddema, *Priest*    The Rev. Dr. William G. Brown, *Assisting Priest Emeritus*

**Deacons:** The Rev. Deacon Rebecca Saager, *Curate*    The Rev. Deacon Susan Kurtz    **Organist:** John Martin

## The Lighting of the Paschal Candle and the Blessing of the New Fire

BCP 285

*The Celebrant first lights the fire, and then greets the People with these words.*

Dear friends in Christ: On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church invites her members, dispersed 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 then blesses the New Fire.*

Let us pray. O God, through your Son you have bestowed upon your people the brightness of your light. Sanctify this New Fire, and grant that in this Paschal Feast we may so burn with heavenly desires, that with pure minds we may attain to the festival of everlasting light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The Paschal Candle is then inscribed and blessed.*

*The Celebrant traces the cross, Alpha and Omega, and year into the Paschal Candle, saying*

Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end.

The Alpha and the Omega, his are the times and the ages.

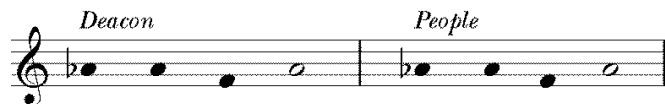
To him be glory and dominion through all ages of eternity. **Amen.**

*A taper is lighted from the New Fire and the Celebrant lights the Paschal Candle, saying*

May the light of Christ gloriously rising dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. **Amen.**

*A minister, bearing the Candle, leads the procession to the chancel, pausing three times and singing.*

*During the procession into the church, the candles of the Congregation are lit.*



The light of Christ. Thanks be to God.

## The Exsultet

*All remain standing*

BCP 286

*A Cantor sings*

Rejoice now, 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 has been vanquished by our eternal King. Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church, and let your holy courts, in radiant light, resound with the praises of your people. All you who 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 lives and reigns with him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, ...



# The Liturgy of the Word

*The Celebrant introduces the Scripture readings in these words*

BCP 288

Let us hear the record of God's saving deeds in history, how he saved his people in ages past; and let us pray that our God will bring each of us to the fullness of redemption.

## Israel's Deliverance at the Red Sea

*All sit.*     *The Reader says*     A Reading from the Book of Exodus     Exodus 14:10-31, 15:20-21

*After the Reading, the Reader says*     The Word of the Lord.

*All*     **Thanks be to God.**

## Canticle 8     *Cantemus Domino*

*All say*

I will sing to the Lord, for he is lofty and up/lifted; \*  
the horse and its rider has he / hurled into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my / refuge; \*  
the Lord has be / come my Savior.

This is my God and I will / praise him, \*  
the God of my people and I / will exalt him.

The Lord is a / mighty warrior; \*  
Yahweh / is his Name.

The chariots of Pharaoh and his army has he hurled  
in/to the sea; \*  
the finest of those who bear armor have been drowned /  
in the Red Sea.

The fathomless deep has over/whelmed them; \*  
they sank into the / depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious / in might; \*  
your right hand, O Lord, has / overthrown the enemy.

Who can be compared with you, O Lord,  
a/mong the gods? \*

who is like you, glorious in holiness,  
awesome in renown, and worker of / wonders?

You stretched forth your / right hand; \*  
the earth / swallowed them up.

With your constant love you led the people /  
you redeemed; \*

with your might you brought them  
in safety to your / holy dwelling.

You will bring them in and / plant them \*  
on the mount of / your possession,

The resting-place you have made for yourself, /  
O Lord, \*

the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hand /has established.

The Lord / shall reign \* for ever / and for ever.

*The Celebrant says* Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, whose wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day, you once delivered by the power of your mighty arm your chosen people from slavery under Pharaoh, to be a sign for us of the salvation of 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.**

## The Gathering of God's People

*All sit.*     *The Reader says*     A Reading from the Prophet Zephaniah 3:12-20

*After the Reading, the Reader says*     The Word of the Lord.

*All*     **Thanks be to God.**

Sing to the Lord a / new song, \*  
for he has done / marvelous things.

With his right hand and his / holy arm \*  
has he won for him/self the victory.

The Lord has made known his / victory; \*  
his righteousness has he openly shown  
in the / sight of the nations.

He remembers his mercy and faithfulness  
to the / house of Israel, \*  
and all the ends of the earth  
have seen the victory / of our God.

Shout with joy to the Lord, / all you lands; \*  
lift up your voice, / rejoice, and sing.

Sing to the Lord / with the harp, \*  
with the harp and the / voice of song.

With trumpets and the sound / of the horn \*  
shout with joy before the / King, the Lord.

Let the sea make a noise and all that / is in it, \*  
the lands and those who / dwell therein.

Let the rivers / clap their hands, \*  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord,  
when he / comes to judge the earth.

In righteousness shall he / judge the world \*  
and the peoples / with equity.

*The Celebrant says* Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of 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 brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*After this Collect, the lights in the Sanctuary and Chancel are turned on, and the Altar candles are lit.*

**The Easter Acclamation**

*Celebrant*

Al - le - lu - ia. Christ is ris - en.

*People*

The Lord is risen indeed. Al - le - lu - ia.

1. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and  
 peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly  
 King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we  
 give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus  
 Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you  
 take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy  
 on us; 5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -  
 ceive our prayer. 6. For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One,  
 you a - lone are the Lord, 7. you a - lone are the Most  
 High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the  
 glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

*The Celebrant then says*

**All**

*Celebrant*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**The First Reading**

Romans 6:3-11

**Psalm 114** *In exitu Israel*

*All say*

Hallelujah! When Israel came /  
 out of Egypt, \*  
 the house of Jacob from a /  
 people of strange speech,  
 Judah became God's / sanctuary \*  
 and Israel / his dominion.

The sea beheld / it and fled; \*  
 Jordan turned and / went back.

The mountains skipped / like rams, \*  
 and the little / hills like young sheep.

What ailed you, O sea, / that you fled? \*  
 O Jordan, / that you turned back?

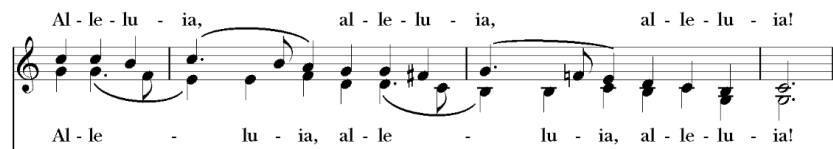
You mountains, that you / skipped like rams? \*  
 you little / hills like young sheep?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence / of the Lord, \*  
 at the presence of the / God of Jacob,

Who turned the hard rock into a / pool of water \*  
 and flint-stone in/to a flowing spring.

**Gospel Acclamation**

*All sing*



**The Holy Gospel**

Matthew 28:1-10

**The Homily**

The Rev. Peter Doddema

**The Baptismal Covenant and Prayers**

*The Celebrant addresses the people*

*All stand*

Through the Paschal mystery, dear friends, we are buried with Christ by Baptism into his death, and raised with him to newness of life. I call upon you, therefore, now that our Lenten observance is ended, to renew the solemn promises and vows of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and all his works, and promised to serve God faithfully in his holy catholic Church.

*Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father?

*All* **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

*Celebrant* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

*All* **I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

*Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

*All* **I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

*Celebrant* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?  
*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?  
*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*The Celebrant then says to the Congregation* Let us pray.

*A minister leads the following petitions:*

*Minister* Deliver us, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Open our hearts to your grace and truth.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Fill us with your holy and life-giving Spirit.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Keep us in the faith and communion of your holy Church.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Teach us to love others in the power of the Spirit.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Send us into the world in witness to your love.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

*Minister* Bring us to the fullness of your peace and glory.  
*All* **Gracious Lord, hear us we pray.**

**The Peace**

BCP 360

**Offertory** Der Tag, der is to Freudenreich (This day so full of glory)

*Johann Sebastian Bach*

**The Holy Communion**

**The Great Thanksgiving** (*Eucharistic Prayer A*)

BCP 361

*The People stand.* *The Celebrant and the People sing responsively:*

The musical notation consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Staff 1: *Celebrant* The Lord be with you. *People* And al - so with you.

Staff 2: *Celebrant* Lift up your hearts. *People* We lift them to the Lord.

Staff 3: *Celebrant* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Staff 4: *People* It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*The Celebrant continues*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. But chiefly are we bound to praise you for the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has won for us everlasting life. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:



Sanctus

All sing

S 130

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and  
might, Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,  
God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are  
full, full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na  
in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na  
in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

**The People stand.** *The Celebrant continues*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

*The Celebrant continues*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**The Great Amen**

**The Lord's Prayer**

*All say*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

**The Breaking of Bread**

BCP 364

*The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread. All are welcome to receive Holy Communion.*

**Fraction Anthem**

*All sing*

S 161

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:  
have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sins of the world: have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

## Communion

*After Communion, the Celebrant says* Let us pray.

**All** Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Blessing

Hymn

Jesus Christ is risen today

*All sing*

Hymnal 207

1 Je - sus Christ is risen to - day, Al - le - lu - ia!  
2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia!  
3 But the pains which he en-dured, Al - le - lu - ia!  
4 Sing we to our God a - bove Al - le - lu - ia!

our tri - um - phant ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!  
un - to Christ, our heaven - ly King, Al - le - lu - ia!  
our sal - va - tion have pro - cured; Al - le - lu - ia!  
praise e - ter - nal as his love; Al - le - lu - ia!

who did once up - on the cross, Al - le - lu - ia!  
who en - dured the cross and grave, Al - le - lu - ia!  
now a - bove the sky he's King, Al - le - lu - ia!  
praise him, all ye heaven - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!

suf - fer to re - deem our loss. Al - le - lu - ia!  
sin - ners to re - deem and save. Al - le - lu - ia!  
where the an - gels ev - er sing. Al - le - lu - ia!  
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. Al - le - lu - ia!

Words: Latin, 14th cent.; tr. *Lyra Davidica*, 1708, alt. St. 4, Charles Wesley (1707-1788) Music: *Easter Hymn*, from *Lyra Davidica*, 1708; adapt. *The Compleat Psalmodist*, 1749, alt., desc. *Hymns Ancient and Modern, Revised*, 1950 Copyright © Hymns Ancient and Modern Limited. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

**The Dismissal**

Deacon  
People

Let us bless the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.  
Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

**Voluntary**

Symphonie Nr. 2: Finale

*Charles-Marie Widor*