

# The Service of Light at Home, from the Great Easter Vigil

Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer

## **Concerning the Vigil**

*The Great Vigil, when observed, is the first service of Easter Day, and dates from the earliest days of the Church. It is celebrated at a convenient time between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Morning.*

*The service normally consists of four parts:*

- 1. The Service of Light.*
- 2. The Service of Lessons.*
- 3. Christian Initiation, or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows.*
- 4. The Holy Eucharist with the administration of Easter Communion.*

**Lay persons** read the Lessons and the Epistle, and assist in other ways. It is desirable that each Lesson be read by a different reader. A lay person may be assigned to chant the Exsultet. At 8:00 p.m., St. James's will post a chanted version of the Exsultet to our Facebook page.

**In the absence of a bishop or priest**, a deacon or lay reader may lead the first two parts of the service, the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, and the Ministry of the Word of the Vigil Eucharist, concluding with the Prayers of the People, the Lord's Prayer, and the Dismissal. When the Vigil is not celebrated, the Service of Light may take place at a convenient time before the Liturgy on Easter Day.

## **To prepare for the Following Service**

- 1. Familiarize yourself with this service guide. The service can be long, so consider the attention-span of your gathering and how much or how little of this guide to observe. Consider too who will serve which roles, and how you wish to set up your space.*
- 2. Materials needed:*
  - a. This service guide*
  - b. A Bible. Versions are also available online, such as at [www.oremus.org](http://www.oremus.org).*
  - c. Optional (For the psalms): Copies of the Book of Common Prayer*
  - d. Optional: A safe place to light the sacred fire, such as a fire pit or grill, set up and ready to light. Alternatively, simply light the Paschal Candle directly.*
  - e. Optional: after the lighting of the Paschal Candle, you may process to another sacred space, perhaps indoors. This space should be dim if not completely dark, as safety allows. The lights will be thrown on joyfully at the first ALLELUIAS of Easter. For ideas*

*on how to set up a sacred space, see*

*<https://doers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HowToSetUpPrayerTable.pdf>*

- f. A candle to serve as your Paschal Candle and a stand for it. This should be a large white candle or a baptismal candle if you have one in your home, but any candle will do. It is customary that the Paschal Candle burn at all services from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost.*
- g. Candles for each member of the gathering. Because the first part of the service is in darkness, you may wish to use booklights to follow the service too.*
- h. A bowl of water*
- i. Greens, like boxwood or flowers, for sprinkling (“asperging”) water on each other*
- j. Bells or other noise-makers*

## The Lighting of the Paschal Candle

*In the darkness, fire is kindled; after which the Leader may address the people in these or similar 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.

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 lighted from the newly kindled fire, and the person (Cantor) bearing the Candle sings or says the following three times (optional: while leading the procession of all to the chancel or other sacred space)*

Cantor	The light of Christ.
People	Thanks be to God.

*If candles have been distributed to members of the congregation, they are lighted from the Paschal Candle at this time. Other candles and lamps in the sacred space, except for those at the Altar, may also be lighted.*

*The Paschal Candle is placed in its stand.*

*Then the person appointed (Cantor), standing near the Candle, sings or says the Exsultet, as follows (the indicated sections may be omitted)*

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Cantor*            The Lord be with you.

*Answer*            And also with you.

*Cantor*            Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*Answer*            It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*Cantor*            It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our  
whole heart and mind and voice, to praise you, the invisible,  
almighty, and eternal God, and your only-begotten Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who  
at the feast of the Passover paid for us the debt of Adam's sin,  
and by his blood delivered your faithful people.

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 land.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered  
from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness  
of life.

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

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God, is your  
mercy and loving-kindness to us, that to redeem a slave, you  
gave a Son.

How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight, and  
sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy  
to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings  
peace and concord.

How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined  
and man is reconciled to God.

Holy Father, accept our evening sacrifice, the offering of this candle in your honor. May it shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find it ever burning--he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

*It is customary that the Paschal Candle burn at all services from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost.*

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

*The Celebrant may introduce the Scripture readings in these or similar words*

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.

*At least two of the following Lessons are read, of which one is always the Lesson from Exodus. After each Lesson, the Psalm or Canticle listed, or some other suitable psalm, canticle, or hymn may be sung. A period of silence may be kept; and the Collect provided, or some other suitable Collect, may be said.*

### **The story of Creation**

Genesis 1:1--2:2

Psalm 33:1-11, or Psalm 36:5-10

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### **The Flood**

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

Psalm 46

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

Almighty God, you have placed in the skies the sign of your covenant with all living things: Grant that we, who are saved through water and the Spirit, may worthily offer to you our sacrifice of thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac**

Genesis 22:1-18

Psalm 33:12-22, or Psalm 16

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

God and Father of all believers, for the glory of your Name multiply, by the grace of the Paschal sacrament, the number of your children; that your Church may rejoice to see fulfilled your promise to our father Abraham; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea**

Exodus 14:10--15:1

Canticle 8, The Song of Moses (*BCP pp. 85*)

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.*

**God's Presence in a renewed Israel**

Isaiah 4:2-6

Psalm 122

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, you led your ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant that we, who serve you now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where all tears are wiped away and where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**Salvation offered freely to all**

Isaiah 55:1-11

Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah (*BCP pp. 86*), or Psalm 42:1-7

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, you have created all things by the power of your Word, and you renew the earth by your Spirit: Give now the water of life to those who thirst for you, that they may bring forth abundant fruit in your glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**A new heart and a new spirit**

Ezekiel 36:24-28

Psalm 42:1-7, or Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah (*BCP pp. 86*)

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who are reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**The valley of dry bones**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 30, or Psalm 143

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Almighty God, by the Passover of your Son you have brought us out of sin into righteousness and out of death into life: Grant to those who are sealed by your Holy Spirit the will and the power to proclaim you to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**The gathering of God's people**

Zephaniah 3:12-20

Psalm 98, or Psalm 126

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 tranquillity 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.*

## Renewal of Baptismal Vows

*The Celebrant may first address the people in these or similar words, all standing*

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.

*Leader* Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

*People* I do.

*Leader* Do you believe in God the Father?

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

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

*People* 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.

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

*People* 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.

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

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



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

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

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

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

*Leader* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

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

*Leader* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

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

*The Leader concludes the Renewal of Vows as follows, with great joy!*

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. **AMEN!**

*THROW ON THE LIGHTS! Make a JOYFUL NOISE with your voices, bells, or noisemakers! Sprinkle water on each other using the greens, reminding each other to "Remember your baptism!" The candles at the Altar may now be lighted from the Paschal Candle.*

*Leader* Alleluia! Christ is risen!

*People* The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

*At any Alleluia that follows, ring your bells or make noise with noisemakers!*

### **Hymn** Jesus Christ is Risen Today

1 Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!  
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!  
who did once upon the cross Alleluia!  
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

2 Hymns of praise then let us sing Alleluia!  
unto Christ our heav'nly King, Alleluia!  
who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!  
sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

3 But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!  
our salvation have procured; Alleluia!  
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!  
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

4 Sing we to our God above Alleluia!  
praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!  
praise him, all ye heav'nly host, Alleluia!  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

*Leader*        The Lord be with you.  
*People*        And also with you.  
*Leader*        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.

**Epistle**    A reading from Romans, Chapter 6, verses 1 to 11. (*from The Message*)

So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace - a new life in a new land! When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country. 6 Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the Cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life - no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

*"Alleluia" may be sung and repeated.*

**Gospel**    A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 28, verses 1 to 10. (*from The Message*)

After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled

back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move. The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed. Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message." The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

### **Prayers of the People: Form III**

*The People stand (standing is the prayer posture of resurrection) and pray responsively*

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

*That we all may be one.*

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

*That your Name may be glorified by all people.*

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

*That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.*

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

*That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

*That our works may find favor in your sight.*

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

Give to the departed eternal rest.

*Let light perpetual shine upon them.*

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

*May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.*

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

*Silence. The People may add their own petitions.*

*The Leader adds this concluding Collect*

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

*Leader*           The Lord be with you.

*People*           And also with you.

*Leader*           Let us pray.

*Leader and People*

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,  
    and the power, and the glory,  
    for ever and ever. Amen.

**Closing Hymn**

Joyful, Joyful, we adore You

1 Joyful, joyful, we adore You,  
God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You,  
Op'ning to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;  
Drive the dark of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
Fill us with the light of day!

2 All Your works with joy surround You,  
Earth and heav'n reflect Your rays,  
Stars and angels sing around You,  
Center of unbroken praise;  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain  
Praising You eternally!

*Leader* Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia!  
*People* Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

3 Always giving and forgiving,  
Ever blessing, ever blest,  
Well-spring of the joy of living,  
Ocean-depth of happy rest!  
Loving Father, Christ our Brother,  
Let Your light upon us shine;  
Teach us how to love each other,  
Lift us to the joy divine.

4 Mortals, join the mighty chorus,  
Which the morning stars began;  
God's own love is reigning o'er us,  
Joining people hand in hand.  
Ever singing, march we onward,  
Victors in the midst of strife;  
Joyful music leads us sunward  
In the triumph song of life