

# LENT NEWSLETTER

## *THIS IS WHERE LENT LEADS*



### **THE EASTER VIGIL IS THE HIGHLIGHT AND GOAL OF OUR HOLY WEEK**

The three days (tridium) of Easter culminate in the great celebration of the Easter Vigil. This is where your parish should be placing its greatest energies and bring everyone to be involved in all parts of the Vigil.

It is the longest and most demanding of all the liturgies during the Church year and it is the one that is celebrated the best. The people who come want

to be there and they give their very best energy.

There are many parts of the Vigil. Each could stand on its own feet but the different parts must rub and strike against each other. New sparks of insight and consolation must shoot out from the different parts of the liturgy

Absorb what you can. The Vigil is like a great smorgasbord meal. You cannot eat it all! Just take what you can digest this year. You have the rest of your life to absorb all that this liturgy offers.

### **HOW TO USE THIS BULLETIN**

Last week this bulletin gave a brief introduction into the first days of Holy Week. This is the 'high holy time.' But now we are moving towards the goal of our Holy Week and our life. We are meant to live and celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All of the baptized are meant to live and witness to the working of the Risen Jesus in our lives. This celebration is meant to deepen our actual participation in the life of Christ.

What we speak, sing and touch during the Vigil is meant to be an expression of what we are living in our daily lives.

Come with expectation to the darkness that is conquered by the light of the risen Christ. Work hard to prepare all the nine readings of the Vigil. Pray over your personal renewal of your baptismal commitment. Share in the very death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Be an Easter People.

May the Easter greeting burst from your heart and your face: "Christ is Risen!" "Indeed, Christ is Risen!"

## The lighting of the new fire

This is the most important liturgy of the entire year. It is the highpoint of our Holy Week.

There is drama, story telling, fire, water, oil, bread and wine and there is light and darkness. Allow all the elements to touch you.

Share your joy and your expectations with your fellow believers on this holy night.

The Vigil must always be celebrated in the night. It can begin at sunset but must be completed before sunrise.

We gather in the darkness. Every parish community should try to have the room as dark as possible. Darkness in the Scriptures always means death and sin, evil and ungodliness. It is into this darkness that we light the new fire. Jesus, risen and alive among us, is our light. Light (i.e., God's power) always conquers the darkness.

We proclaim "Christ our light!" We are stating how powerful the risen Lord is over all the forces of evil in the world. The strongest is death and this has been defeated by the Risen Lord.

The new Easter light is passed out and all hold the light while the triumph of Christ the Light is proclaimed.

## Our story of salvation

Now we begin sharing the story of our salvation. The Vigil is very much a night of story telling, but this time it is God's story and our salvation which we share.

We begin with the seven days of creation.

The center of the readings from the Old Testament is the third reading where Moses delivers the slaves from Egypt. This is their passover night. This is the great act of deliverance.

We always understand our Vigil as celebrating our passover. Jesus has moved from death to life. Jesus has risen from the dead.

Then we continue with the ups and downs of our salvation story. Then we come to the triumph of Jesus Christ. He has conquered all sin and has joined us to himself in the waters of baptism.

This involves us very clearly. We are sharers in the great mystery of God redeeming humanity. We are joined as sisters and brothers to the very Son of God.

We look all evil and darkness in the face and we spite, we defy, the power of evil with the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Indeed! Christ is Risen!

We have not sung the great "alleluia" since Ash Wednesday. As we burst into song and praise we take the very old, "God be praised" and we sing it out with full voice.

The Lord is risen! This is not something that has happened way back when. There was an actual historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has and is Risen.

But the Resurrection must always be a 'now' event. Jesus must be risen and triumph in our own lives. We must be filled with the spirit and the power of the Risen Lord.

The Spirit of Jesus must direct and shape our lives, our attitudes, our concerns. Jesus must be risen in us. Today!

Sing out your Alleluia until your vocal cords burst!



## We renew our baptism

As the Church recovers its sense of baptism this part of the Easter Vigil will take on more and more meaning for you.

The foundation sacrament is always Baptism. It is here that we are joined to Jesus Christ, we are made a part of the great work of God for the salvation of the human race.



Baptism is never something that can happen to us, like, 'I was baptized in this church!'

Baptism is our way of life into Jesus Christ. It is our growing and sharing in the outpouring of God's love for the human race.

It takes a whole lifetime to be baptized. Only as we are changed, transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus, can we say that we are baptized.

This is such a distance from the way that most people want to understand baptism but it will radically transform the way we understand ourselves as being Church. Baptism will change the Church!

One of the first things we should eliminate from our understanding

of ourselves is to see that we 'were baptized Catholics' and the others who joined the Church as adults are 'converts.'

Wrong diagnosis! We are all meant to be converts, which means that we are pilgrims seeking a deeper life with Jesus Christ. Our life has just begun to be changed by the working of the Holy Spirit within us.

This is why we come to the renewal of our baptismal vows as if we were just about to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ. We must stand before the waters of baptism, shivering, tense but convinced that we have been called to join the person, the life and the mission of Jesus.

When the priest will take the Easter Candle and plunge it three times into the waters feel yourself being plunged into the mystery of Jesus Christ. Christ the Light, the resurrected Christ, must be plunged into your life.

You will be asked, you will be challenged: Do you reject Satan? Do you reject all his empty promises?

May your 'yes' burst out of determination and conviction that you will give all that you have to live the way of Jesus Christ. May it come out of your struggles to be faithful to Christ in all things. May you have the scars of turning back to Christ after we had wandered from the path of the Gospel.

And then we are challenged: Do you believe?

Say yes with appreciation for God the Father for gifting your life and filling the earth with goodness. May your yes come from a deep sense of oneness with all the clouds, the rain and the abundant harvest of wheat and canola.

Say yes to Jesus Christ for being the living person of God among us. Jesus gave us the very person and life of God. We can touch God in the person of Jesus. And he has made us the daughters and sons of God the Father. We belong to God. We belong to each other.

Say yes to the Holy Spirit. This is God in the present tense living and working among us. Every time you are moving into prayer, this is under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is so close. Sense the Holy Spirit within your own skin!

Stand tall. On this holy night renew who you have become in Jesus Christ: the baptized, sharing the life and mission of the Son of God, Jesus himself.





***PRAY THAT THIS  
EASTER VIGIL WILL BE  
AN EXPERIENCE OF  
PASSOVER TO THE  
LAND OF THE RISEN  
CHRIST.***



L: Eternal Father, who liberated the Hebrews from the slavery of Egypt,

All: Have mercy on us, your people.

L: Almighty Father, who have led your people through the hardships of the desert into the Promised Land.

All: Have mercy on us, your people.

L: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who did penance for forty days in the desert and resisted the temptations of the devil.

All: Have mercy in us, your people.

L: Our divine Savior, who came to liberate us from the slavery of sin.

All: Come and save us, your people.

L: Redeemer of the world, who came to give us the life of grace.

All: Come and save us, your people.

L: King of glory, who want us to share in your victory over temptation and to lead us into the Promised Land of heaven.

All: Come and save us, your people.

L: Triumphant God, who have given us these days of grace to prepare ourselves for the glory of Easter.

All: We pray you, hear us.

L: You who want our sanctification through sacrifice, prayer and good works.

All: We pray you, hear us.

L: You who came to seek and save all men and to give all sinners the grace of conversion.

All: We pray you, hear us.

L: Lord Jesus Christ, send us your Holy Spirit to make us strong in temptation, steadfast in sacrifice, persevering in prayer and generous in charity.

L: Let us pray.

O God, we behold ancient miracles shining even in our day, for you now accomplish for all nations by means of the water of spiritual rebirth that saving action you performed for the chosen people in the land of Egypt.

Grant that the whole world may join in the ranks of your chosen people and share the prerogative of your children. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

