

# The Vigil of Easter

*In the early Church the Easter festival was preceded by a time of reflection and instruction for those who would be confirmed in the faith and baptized at the first light of the Resurrection festival. The night preceding the Resurrection was dedicated to prayer and final instruction in the faith. The vigil, or watch, was rich in symbolism. It called to mind the Jewish Passover: waiting, watching, praying and the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb. It called to mind the power of God's Word in His glorious acts of Creation and Redemption. It reminded the catechumens that the Baptism they were about to receive drew its strength from Christ's resurrection, and that this Sacrament would unite them with Christ for this life and for the life to come. The Easter Alleluia sounds forth for the first time in the midst of the dark night and we are carried in spirit to Christ's tomb where the Creator's Sabbath rest was transformed into a new Day and Age, the Day of the Lord.*

*The service begins in semi-darkness and silence.*

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## 1. The Service of Light

### *The Exhortation*

Dear friends in Christ: On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church gathers to watch and pray. For this is the Passover of our Lord, Who through His Word and Sacraments comes among us to lead us in resurrection triumph to the promised land of faith and hope, freed from our slavery to sin, death and Satan.

### *The Salutation and Collect*

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And with your spirit.**

Let us all pray. O God, You enlightened this most holy night with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Preserve in all Your people the spirit of adoption which You have given, so that, renewed in body and soul, they may serve You in all purity; through the same, Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### *Processional of the Paschal Light (please stand)*

P: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,

**C: The Light no darkness can extinguish.**

*(The following is sung three times, each time at a higher pitch—E, F#, and G#—as the candle is carried into the sanctuary.)*

### *The Exultet (or Easter Proclamation)*

Rejoice now, heavenly choirs of angels! Sound forth, trumpet of salvation, for the victory of so great a King!

Rejoice now, all the earth, for darkness is destroyed by the power of the eternal King!  
Rejoice now, mother Church, for the brilliant Light burns among you, full of grace and truth!

It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to the almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord;

For He is the very paschal Lamb which was offered for us and has taken away the sins of the world. By His death He has destroyed death, and by His rising to life again He has restored to us everlasting life.

For this is the true paschal feast, in which the blood of the Lamb hallows the doorposts of the faithful.

This is the night on which He brought our forefathers, the children of Israel, on dry land through the midst of the Red Sea.

This is the night in which the light of the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin. This is the night in which all who believe in Christ are redeemed from sin, death and the grave.

This is the night in which Christ burst the bonds of death and arose victorious from the grave.

O wondrous mercy of God towards us that His Son should ransom a slave, with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death!

O wondrous wisdom of God that Adam's sin should bring a Savior to rescue the world!

O wondrous night when sin is washed away, and innocence is restored to a fallen world!

O wondrous night when man is reconciled to God in Christ!

**O Lord Jesus Christ, bright Sun of the world: Shine upon our spirits and drive away the night of sin, that we may walk in Your holy light throughout our lives and eternally, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.**

The Hymn: Shine in our Hearts, O Most Precious Light

ELH 33:2,3

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## 2. The Service of the Word

*(Three or more of the lessons are read; the lesson from Exodus and the concluding collect are always read. The appointed psalm, canticle, or hymn should be sung following each lesson.)*

*(please be seated)*

Let us hear the holy and comforting Word of the Lord from the Old Testament in which God reveals His saving will towards us.

Creation: Genesis 1:1-2:2

The Responsory: **Psalm 8, p. 174**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 435:2**

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

The Responsory: **Psalm 43, p. 180**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 527:1,2**

The Faith of Abraham: Genesis 15:1-6

The Responsory: **Psalm 27, p. 178**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 229:1,4**

Abraham's Faith Confirmed: Genesis 22:1-18

The Responsory: **Psalm 86, p. 184**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 227:11,12**

Israel Freed from Slavery: Exodus 14:10-15:1

The Responsory: **Cantemus Domino, The Song of Miriam and Moses, p. 195-196**

*(Cantor and congregation sing alternately by whole verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 226:1,10**

Naaman Cleansed: 2 Kings 5:1-3; 9-15a

The Responsory: **Psalm 42, p. 179**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 248:1,2**

Israel Renewed: Isaiah 4:2-6

The Responsory: **Psalm 122, p. 192**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 535:4,5**

Salvation for All: Isaiah 55:1-11

The Responsory: **Confitebor Tibi, Isaiah 12, p. 196**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 449:1,3**

New Hearts and Spirits: Ezekiel 36:24-28

The Responsory: **Exultavit Cor Meum, The Song of Hannah, p. 196**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 483:8,9**

The Dry Bones: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Responsory: **Psalm 32, p. 179**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 432:1,6,11**

Salvation is from the Lord: Jonah 1:1- 2:10

The Responsory: **Psalm 139, p. 193**

*(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)*

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 426:3,8**

God Gathers His People: Zephaniah 3:12-20

The Responsory: **Benedicite omnia opera, Song of the Three Young Men, p. 197**  
(Cantor sings odd-numbered verses; all join on even-numbered verses.)

*or*

The Responsory: **Hymn: 511:1,2,8,9**

*(please stand)*

The Collect for the Word: p. 58, III

*(please be seated)*

The Homily

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### **3. The Renewal of the Baptismal Covenant**

*(please stand)*

Beloved in the Lord! You have been baptized into the Christian faith. In this Baptism you have been joined to Christ and adopted as a child by God our heavenly Father to inherit the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. May the Lord through His Holy Spirit enliven your hearts to renounce the devil and confess the faith in this renewal of your Baptismal covenant.

Do you renounce the devil and all his works, and all his ways?

**I do renounce them.**

Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

**I believe in God the Father Almighty. . .** *(Apostles' Creed, page 68)*

Will you continue steadfast in the true faith, even unto the end?

**May the Triune God, who has adopted me as His child, preserve me in the grace of my Baptism, and keep me steadfast in the faith to the salvation of my soul. Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

**He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**OR**

**THE FOLLOWING FORM (#3) IS USED WHEN THERE IS A BAPTISM.**

### **3. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

Hymn: He That Believes And Is Baptized

**ELH 241:1**

The Order of Holy Baptism, **p. 133**

Hymn: He That Believes And Is Baptized

**ELH 241:2**

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## 4. The First Vespers of Easter

*(please stand)*

Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

**He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

The Versicles and Gloria Patri, **p. 120**

Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen Again!

**ELH 344:1,3**

*(During the Hymn the altar candles are lit from the paschal candle; the sanctuary is fully lighted.)*

*(please be seated)*

The First Lesson: Romans 6: 3-11

The Responsory: The Power of Sin No Longer

**ELH 243**

The Second Lesson: Matthew 28: 1-10

*(please stand)*

The Canticle: *Dignus est Agnus*, This is the Feast of Victory

**ELH 359:1,2,4**

The Lord's Prayer, **p. 125**

The Collects, **p. 126**

The Benedicamus and Benediction, **p. 127**

The Closing Hymn: The Day of Resurrection

**ELH 356**

The Postlude