

# EASTER VIGIL

April 3 2021

## ***Standing...***

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Vigil of Easter brings a conclusion to the sacred Triduum,  
ushering in the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord.  
By morning, the whole world will know of an open, empty tomb.  
But you are here tonight...on the most holy of all nights—  
watching and waiting.

This is the night when the chains of Death are broken forever  
and Light breaks out  
from the darkness of the grave.

Let us pray. Father of all mercies, grant that as the crucified body of Your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with Him the coming of the third day and rise with Him to newness of life. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

Tonight, you started where the Bible starts—right at the beginning,  
when, there was only darkness.

Everything was void and empty and without form.

Before God spoke, there was no light, thus life did not and could not exist.

But upon God speaking there was light...light in the darkness.

God spoke and it came to be—"Let there be light..."

He went on to divide the light from the darkness  
because the light drives away the darkness.

And with that light, came life.

Everything was very good.

But soon, darkness reappeared.

Darkness came in the form of a serpent,  
who crept in through a lie, a lie that was believed.

Thus, darkness came upon all Mankind,  
the darkness of sin,  
the darkness of death.

It was no longer very good,

and it didn't take very long to get that way.

My friends, this is a darkness you have known...

for you too have had shadowy thoughts and dark desires,

you too have done the murky works of darkness.

Sin loves darkness,

sin brings darkness.

Sin brings Death.

Each of you have been touched by Death.

For fallen Mankind, Death prevails,

with everyone facing the darkness of the tomb.

But from out there, you were led into this holy place by a small, flickering light.

God does not desire to keep you in the darkness forever.

Once inside, you heard a series of readings—

readings from the Old Testament,

which bear witness to Christ's work

in, with, and under the history of Israel.

And through His saving history,

they have revealed who you are—

how you were created by God,

chosen by God,

redeemed by God—

all of which came to you

in the death and resurrection

of Jesus Christ,

delivered to you

in Holy Baptism.

This is why you participated in the rite of Holy Baptism,

and made to recall from Genesis 1, verses 1 and 2

how God would one day bring forth a new creation—

a new creation out of the darkness by means of

His Spirit, water, and Word.

So in His mercy, in His grace, and love that knows no limit,

light came into the darkness.

In Him, was life and that life was the light of men.

At His appearing, the dark night,

erupted with the appearance of a bright star—

a star unlike any other.

It pierced the dark night and led men to Him.

He spoke the truth.

He blessed.

He healed.

He cured.

At His Word deformities and the suffering that afflicted His creation  
were made right.

He gave sight to the blind, releasing them from darkness,  
and brought them into the light as well.

He raised the dead from the darkness of the grave  
to the light of life.

The darkness rallied—you knew it would. The darkness rallied by lies and debauchery.

The light was seized and arrested  
and declared to be darkness.

Truth was convicted of lies.

The true light veiled in flesh—

dimmed by His humiliation—

was overcome by darkness.

The darkness of the fallen, sinful hearts of men  
were allowed to envelop the true Light.

It seemed evil had won.

It seemed that lies had overcome the truth,

darkness had prevailed,

death had prevailed,

and your only hope was snuffed out.

Then came the deepest darkness yet—

the black darkness of the tomb—

where death reigned.

This is how our Good Friday service ended, in darkness—

wherein the light progressively died.

Yet, tonight, though we begin in darkness,

the light continually grows.

For in the darkness of the tomb, the light appeared—the light of Christ.

Life hidden in Death and Light extinguished by darkness did not last long.

For He who was dead took up His life again just as He promised.

Hear the testimony of the Evangelists.

See with the eyes of faith. Beloved, the tomb is empty.

He who shone brightly,

as a pillar of fire by night to lead His people, brings His light to you.

He who shone brightly,

as the burning bush to announce the deliverance of His people,  
brings His light to you.

As Moses spoke to Israel perishing in the desert,  
so tonight that word is for you. It is,

*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord  
which He will accomplish for you.*

*The Lord will fight for you...*

And fight He did—and triumphed.

Truth triumphed.

Light triumphed.

Life triumphed.

You know, if Easter is only a memorial of Christ's great victory,

just an event to annually tip your hat to...

then there's not much in it for you to celebrate.

But the resurrection of your Lord Jesus benefits you both now,  
and forever.

For since He experienced the darkness of the tomb,  
you are now spared eternal darkness.

He showed Himself alive on that first brilliant Easter morn,  
that you might see and believe,  
hear and trust,

so as to offer this same eternal life to you,  
doing so through the saving flood...

Delivering you from death to life through water,  
the water of the font,

bringing about the benefits  
of regeneration,  
renewal, cleansing,  
healing and rebirth.

That blessed water is the means

by which the Holy Spirit implants that saving Word in you—  
as you die to sin in the font and as you are raised to new life.

Like Pharaoh's horses and riders, your sins are thrown into the sea,  
never again to emerge.  
For the Lord is your strength and your song,  
and He has become your salvation.

And you, O baptized saint of God, have the promise of your resurrection.  
For your tomb will not hold you.  
Christ has defeated sin.  
Christ has defeated Death.  
Darkness everywhere is overcome  
by the brightness of your everlasting King.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.