

Lancaster St Bernadette Parish Bremen St Mary Parish



The Crucifixion

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

March 25, 2018

and Holy Week

March 25-31

St Bernadette Parish.

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

[stbernadetteparish . net](http://stbernadetteparish.net)

cover picture: **The Crucifixion**

Painted (1873) by Evgraf Semenovich Sorokin (1821-1892)

St Mary Parish.

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7738
BREMEN, OH 43107

our parishes

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pastor

at St Bernadette Parish

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liturgical music

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center,
across the back parking lot from the school.

Hours: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.

1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

(740) 654 • 1893

<http://stbernadetteparish.net>

at Bremen St Mary Parish

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liturgical music

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The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.

Hours: 9-11 AM, Tuesdays.

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at both parishes

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]Saint Bernadette School

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secretary

Saint Bernadette School is located at

1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

stbernlan@cducation.org.

www.stbernadetteschool.com

Bremen St Vincent de Paul (740) 569-7738

Lancaster St Vincent de Paul www.svdplancasteroh.com

Diocese of Columbus www.columbuscatholic.org

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) www.angelsAND.org

sacramental life

Where

Our parishes are where Catholics worship. We can receive the Anointing of the Sick at any appropriate place from the appropriate minister. The first reception of Eucharist and of Penance as well as the reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony may only be **in one's own parish church**, unless with good reason the pastor deems it **necessary** to do otherwise.

Baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. Try to attend before the child is born. If you are expecting (or already have) a newborn or if you somehow haven't gotten around to having an older child baptized, call Kathy to make plans now.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; those parents are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. Both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly (a major component of being a practicing Catholic!), there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

Penance

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

Every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for St Bernadette School children four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the Penance at least once a year.

Anointing and Care of the Sick

The priest gives the Anointing of the Sick to one who is dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age.

- We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."
- The priest brings Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

Holy Matrimony

Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before a wedding. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation**. And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. Catholics who marry outside the Church have left the sacramental life and need to change that situation before receiving the other sacraments. The Church wishes to support couples **through the years** of their married life. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.

At Prayer with the Church

The Church Prays

on Palm Sunday

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed
his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

on Holy Thursday

O God, who have called us
to participate in this most sacred Supper,
in which your Only Begotten Son,
when about to hand himself over to death,
entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity,
the banquet of his love,
grant, we pray, that we may draw from so great a mystery
the fullness of charity and of life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

on Good Friday

Remember your mercies, O Lord,
and with your eternal protection sanctify your servants
for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his Blood,
established the Paschal Mystery.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

at the Easter Vigil

O God, who make this most sacred night
radiant with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection,
stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption,
so that, renewed in body and mind,
we may render you undivided service.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Pope Francis Asks Us to Pray This Month

that the Church may appreciate
the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment,
both on the personal and communitarian levels.

Mass Intentions This Week

Mar 26, Monday	8:20 AM	at St Bernadette	Richard Usilton
Mar 27, Tuesday	8:20 AM	at Bremen St Mary	deceased of Schmelzer family
Mar 28, Wednesday	8:20 AM	at St Bernadette	Jerome Messerly
Mar 29, Thursday	7 PM	at St Bernadette	for the universal Church
Mar 30, Friday	1 PM	at St Bernadette	(not a Mass)

It is the Easter Triduum!

Well, this Thursday, Friday and Saturday are. These three holy days are unlike any others in the year. Make a special effort to come to all three of the liturgies at our parishes during these high holy days. If you have to work or have some other reason you can't make one or the other of them, still **try to keep these as**

days of prayer and quiet reflection on the wondrous things that the Lord has done for us. Come to church here (or any Catholic church) and spend time in prayer. Jesus asked Simon in the Garden: "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?"

The Triduum Together

Our two parishes will celebrate the Triduum together. We can't have separate liturgies because we only have one priest now. We will celebrate these liturgies **at St Bernadette because that church has more room.** But this will be a joint liturgy with servers, lectors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion from both parishes. The times are set for us more or less by the times of the events commemorated in the liturgy:

- Holy Thursday March 29 7 PM
- Good Friday March 30 1 PM
- The Easter Vigil March 31 9 PM

Hear God's Word

Mar 25 Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord	Isaiah	50:4-7	Ps 22 Phil 2:6-11	Mark Mark 14:1-15:47	11:1-10
Mar 26, Monday of Holy Week	Isaiah	42:1-7	Ps 27	John	12:1-11
Mar 27, Tuesday of Holy Week	Isaiah	49:1-6	Ps 71	John	13:21-38
Mar 28, Wednesday of Holy Week	Isaiah	50:4-9	Ps 69	Matt	26:14-25
Mar 29, Holy Thursday	Exodus	12:1-14	Ps 116 1Cor 11:23-26	John	13:1-15
Mar 30, Good Friday	Isaiah	52:13-53:12	Ps 31 Heb 4:14-5:9	John	18:1-19:42
Mar 31, Holy Saturday	Genesis Genesis Exodus Isaiah Ezekiel Romans	1:1-2:2 22:1-18 14:15-15:1 55:1-11 36:16-28 6:3-11	Ps 33 Ps 16 Ex 15 Is 12 Ps 42 Ps 118	Mark	16:1-7
Apr 1 Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord	Acts	10:34-43	Ps 118 Col 3:1-4	John	20:1-9

Good Friday

Fast and Abstinence

Remember on Good Friday Catholics 14 or older **abstain from meat** and all adult Catholics under 59 **fast**. One or two smaller meals may be taken, but may not total one full meal. And that day we do not eat between meals. Children and those not bound by the law should exercise some form of self-denial on that very holy day.

The Way of the Cross

There will be Good Friday evening **Stations at St Mary in Bremen** (but, of course, without Benediction) at 7 PM on Good Friday, but no Stations or Benediction at all on Good Friday evening at St Bernadette.

A Special Collection

Once a year on Good Friday, our parishes are called to **support Christians in the Holy Land**. The annual Good Friday collection offers a direct link for parishioners to be witnesses of peace and to help protect the Holy Places. Franciscans and others in the Holy Land are housing and feeding the poor, providing religious formation and education, maintaining shrines and parishes, and conducting pastoral ministry. Visit MyFranciscan.org/good-friday. Please be as generous as your abundance allows.

Carry the Cross

Men of the Holy Catholic Church, complete your Lenten fast with a truly masculine prayer and participate in *Carry the Cross* on Holy Saturday, Mar 31, at Clear Creek Metro Park. Arrive for Morning Prayer at 7:45 AM, hike begins with the reading of the first station at 8 AM. Final prayer is at 3 PM. Carry the Cross is a **12-mile Stations of the Cross hike sponsored by Wilderness Outreach** for the men, fathers, and sons of the Columbus Diocese. A cross constructed of 3"x6" timber, approximately 10 feet long with a 7-foot cross beam is carried by the men on the journey with the Stations of the Cross prayed every mile or so. Men should bring a day pack with 2-3 liters of water, snacks, and rain gear if appropriate. During the hike silent meditation on our Lord's passion, praying the rosary, and other communal and traditional prayers are also encouraged. Last year 138 laymen, fathers and sons, participated. Partial participation is possible. The starting location will be in the parking lot and shelter house at the Barneby Hambleton area at the western end of the park. For information contact John Bradford at wildernessoutreach2560 @ gmail . com or (614) 679-6761.

Lent

Rice Bowl

We hear in Sacred Scripture this week how Christ redeemed us not by a one-time small gift, but by becoming one of us and giving His whole self even unto death on a Cross. Through our support of Operation Rice Bowl, Catholic Relief Services gives more than short-term assistance to poor countries; it **establishes long term, person-focused**, sustainable programs that provide better opportunities for each individual, and it remains in communities to help these efforts succeed. Please remember to return your Rice Bowls in the collection at Easter.

Fish to Fry

Lancaster **Knights of Columbus** will fry fish on Mar 30 and Apr 6. Cost for adults is \$8 and for children is \$6. The Kof C hall is at 343 E Walnut St.

St Bernadette Parish

Helping Cash Flow

St Bernadette Parish has been blessed with an annual disbursement of funds from our endowment stewarded by The Catholic Foundation. By God's varied grace we honor the many donors, whose charitable love for our Faith is strengthening our ministry through The Catholic Foundation. Disbursements were recently made to St Bernadette School for \$11,000 and to St Bernadette Parish for \$7,500. For information on how you can help build our endowment, visit www.catholic-foundation.org or call Scott Hartman at (614) 443-8893.

St Bernadette School Registration

St Bernadette School announces **invites you to register now your children** grades preschool through 5th for the 2018-2019 school year. Private tours and classroom observations are available at any time. Want to send your children to a fine Catholic school like St Bernadette, St Mary's middle school, or Fisher Catholic High School, but you wonder about the cost? Assistance is available.

For information, call the school office at (740) 654-3137.

The **preschool program** offers a progressive learning approach, and kindergarten-readiness goals, within a flexible schedule.

Elementary grades (full-day kindergarten through 5th grade) offer a highly respected program of academic excellence and positive experiences.

St Bernadette School offers a full day **kindergarten program** that fosters the academic, social and emotional growth and development of each child in a very family-friendly environment. Studies show that the advantages of a full-day program far outweigh a half-day, including but certainly not limited to, full-day kindergartners learning more literacy and mathematics than those in half-day programs.

Ministry at Mass at St Bernadette

+	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
Saturday, Mar 24, at 4 PM Vigil of Palm Sunday	Robert Christy, Sandy Landefeld	Joey Mannella, Avee & Drew Solt, Jack Tencza	Angie Christy, Marguerite Grimm, Joyce Guenther, Lee Guinan, Denise McGuire, Kathy Wagner
Sunday, Mar 25, at 11 AM Palm Sunday	John Hartig, David Shonk	Collin & Emma McCrady, Caroline Messerly, Gunner Robertson	Terry Carpenter, Tara Craaybeek, Teresa Hartig, Jim & Rita Merk, Anna Sevigny
Monday, 8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Hyde O'Rielley, Olivia Reynolds	Pat Dreyer, Kathy Kehnast
Wednesday, 8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Silus Hopkins, Isabelle Lazar	Angie Christy, Mary Jane Vajen
Holy Thursday, 7 PM	Marguerite Grimm, Jeanne Schmelzer	Logan & Tori Loy, Dominic & Emeline Neighbor	Terry Carpenter, Rosalie DeFillippo, John & Teresa Hartig, Sandy Landefeld, Denise McGuire
Good Friday, 1 PM	Teresa Scarpitti, Barbara VanFossen-Cook	Collin & Emma McCrady, Brennan Quaintance, Daniel Turner	Deacons
Holy Saturday, Mar 31, at 9 PM Easter Vigil	Terry Carpenter, Bob Christy, Dennis Forquer, John Hartig, Becky Kuhn, Brad Rider, David Shonk	Anna Hartig, Samantha Kerns, Logan Loy, Daniel Turner	Angie Christy, Teresa Hartig, Kathy Kehnast, Jim Kuhn, Teresa Scarpitti
Sunday, Apr 1, at 11 AM Easter Sunday	Tara Craaybeek	Clara & Susan Craaybeek, Eve Darfus, Dominic Neighbor	Rosalie DeFillippo, Sandy Landefeld, Ben Peters, Larry Sanford, Anna Sevigny, Becky Wickhan

Bremen St Mary Parish

Your Donation to the Food Pantry

The Bremen Food Pantry needs margarine or butter (among other things!). Place your donation in the refrigerator in the kitchen at St Mary parish hall. This will help the **Pantry Open House** in Bremen, on Saturday, Apr 14, from 9-11 AM, when any family in need can stop by to receive food assistance, with no prior registration or sign up needed.



St Vincent de Paul

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Bremen takes up a collection on the first Sunday of each month. **St Vincent always needs members.** Call Angi Skinner at (740) 438-0027 if you can help.

Ministry at Mass at St Mary

+	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Palm Sunday, Mar 25, at 8:30 AM	Barb VanFossen-Cook, Pete Kunkler, Linda Qualls	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Irene Kunkler, Pam Redding, Barb VanFossen-Cook	James Noll Jr family	Chris Redding
Easter Sunday, Apr 1 at 8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Spencer Conrad, Nicole Terry	Wyatt Borah, Tyna Schmelzer-Fox, Barb VanFossen-Cook	Catherine Noll, April Schmelzer	Barb Van Fossen-Cook

Here and There

Weekly Confessions & Masses

But these times sometimes change, so to call ahead!							
parish	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Penance
Bremen St Mary		8:20 AM					8 AM Sun
Lancaster St Bernadette	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	9 AM on First Sat	5:30 PM Thu, 3 PM Sat, 8:30 AM on First Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM			4 PM Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM		5:30 PM Sat
<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	VARIES	NOON	7 AM	NOON	NOON		½ hour before Mass
<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		9 AM		4 PM Sat
<i>Logan St John</i>	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM	4 PM Sat
<i>Fisher Catholic HS</i>					2:40 PM		2 PM on First Fri

Day of Recollection

On Saturday, Apr 14, from 10:30 AM to 3 PM **Sister Louis Mary Passeri OP** in the Lancaster St Mary Church Spirit Center. will guide **reflections on the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection.** Call St Mary parish office at (740) 653-0997 to register. Fee of \$15 includes lunch and is due to the office prior to this day of recollection.

Pilgrimage to Carey

Join a Marian pilgrimage to Our Lady of Consolation Basilica and Shrine in Carey, on Wednesday, May 2, for **a day of prayer.** Cost is \$35. Lunch may be purchased at the cafeteria. Send a check (payable to Margaret Kronenbitter, 2700 Wayne Ridge Rd, Zanesville, Ohio 43701) by Monday, Apr 2. Call Rita Merk at (740) 654-3255 or Ann Messerly at (740) 654-3447 for information.

in the Diocese of Columbus

Silent Retreat for Women

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women presents **a women's silent retreat** on *Being Present in the Here & Now* at St Therese Retreat Center in Columbus from Friday, Apr 13, at 5 PM through Sunday, Apr 15, at noon. The retreat leader is Fr Sean Dooley. Cost is \$130 which includes meals. Contact DCCW president Katie Boesch at kboesch @ columbuscatholic . org or (614) 228-8601.

Bid O'Luck at Fisher Catholic

Donations are being gathered for the live and silent auctions at the **Bid O'Luck dinner auction** happening on Saturday, Apr 28, with the theme of *Saturday Night Irish Fever.* Contact Milea Quaintance at (740) 689-3288 to **donate goods, cash or services.** Bid O'Luck **raffle tickets are now on sale** for one \$7,500 prize and five \$500 prizes. Tickets (\$100 each) can be purchased after Mass today and on Apr 14 & 15 or by contacting Kellie Shonk at (740) 654-1231 or keshonk @ cdeducation . org. Buy a raffle ticket for yourself, or gather your friends and split the cost.

Help in the Opiate Addiction Epidemic

For **resources and suggestions** for families, schools, and parishes to respond to the opiate addiction epidemic in Ohio, visit [www . columbuscatholic . org/drug-awareness](http://www.columbuscatholic.org/drug-awareness) or contact the Social Concerns office at (614) 241-2540.

A Weekend for Your Marriage

Come to a **Marriage Encounter Weekend** and learn ways **to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love** for each other and for God. For information about a weekend, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit [www . wmwecolumbus . org](http://www.wmwecolumbus.org).

Bethesda Healing Program

The Bethesda Healing Program is held the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. It is **for mothers and fathers who have suffered the experience of abortion.** They gather twice a month to share, heal, and grow. The first step of the healing journey is to acknowledge the hurt; the second step is to seek support. They provide a confidential safe place where anyone hurting from abortion can come for healing, prayer and love. To learn about time and place call the office at (614) 718-0277. Discover more at [www . bethesdahealing . org](http://www.bethesdahealing.org). Confidential ministry support lines are (614) 309-2651 and (614) 309-0157.

You are invited to **Rich in Mercy**, a special Bethesda Healing Ministry **benefit event**, on Thursday, Apr 26, at St Agatha Church. Mass is at 5:30 PM followed by dinner and a program. The celebrant and speaker will be Bishop James Wall, bishop of Gallup, NM. Featured harpist is Mrs Kathleen Tully, director of music at St Patrick Church. An appeal will be made at the dinner for your help in continuing this ministry of hope and healing. Tickets are \$30 each and can be purchased at [bethesdahealing . org](http://bethesdahealing.org) or by calling Diana Davis at (614) 718-0277.

Jail & Prison Ministry Conference

The **Living as Missionary Disciples** conference is for both experienced prison ministers and those interested in prison ministry. It happens on Saturday, April 28, from 9:30 AM to 3 PM at St Elizabeth Church in Columbus. Keynote speaker is Ron Zeilinger, executive director of Dismas Ministry, a national Catholic prison outreach. Conference topics include restorative

justice, models of ministry, reentry ministry, and advocacy. Cost is free. Register by Apr 24 at www.columbuscatholic.org/prison-ministry-criminal-justice or call (614) 241-2540.

Catholic Men's Luncheon Club

The next Catholic Men's Luncheon Club happens on Friday, Apr 6, at St Patrick Church in downtown Columbus and features a talk about the ARCH (Accompanying Returning Citizens with Hope) Ministry. Speaker is Jerry Freewalt, diocesan director for parish social concerns ministry and rural life. Mass is at 11:45 AM, followed by lunch and the presentation. No reservations are necessary; \$10 covers the lunch and meeting. Bring a friend.

Catholic Familyland Retreats

Life is hectic. This spring, slow down and spend a quiet weekend with Our Lord. Attend an **Alone with God** retreat at Catholic Familyland in Bloomingdale, Ohio.

- **Men's retreat** is Apr 12-15;
- **Women's retreat** is Apr 26-29.

Step away from the intensity of daily life to rediscover your Father's love in the silence. Retreat includes inspiring conferences to deepen your knowledge of God, spiritual direction for your journey of faith, abundant graces given through the sacraments, and rest. Learn more or register at afc.org.

+

More Thoughts About Our High Holy Days

The Sacred Triduum (the three holy days) of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (with its great liturgy of the Easter Vigil) is a set of days like no other days in the year. They begin and end with a joyous festival. But in between there is a time of somber and quiet prayerfulness.

On Friday the Church requires of us (those of us who are of a certain age and whose health makes it possible) that we should **fast** and **abstain** from eating meat. Many serious Catholics extend that fast from just after Holy Thursday Mass through Holy Saturday Vigil Mass. This isn't a fast like that awful fast before your colonoscopy; it is more a matter of a serious moderation. And the fast shouldn't be just about food. It is good to try to abstain from all the diversions and entertainments of ordinary days so that we can **focus on the awesome mysteries** that are meant to be at the forefront of our attention during these days. Prayer needs focus. Focus requires self-denial. Self-denial has its rewards.

Good Friday

The **liturgy of the passion of the Lord** is observed on Good Friday afternoon. That is the only day in all the year when Mass is not celebrated. But the liturgy—there should only be one in each parish—has **an austere beauty**. It is usually scheduled during the three hours the Lord spent on the Cross, from noon until three. It usually lasts a bit more than one hour. Catholics try to spend as much time as they can in silent reading of the Scriptures and in prayer all during the Triduum, but especially during those hours. They try to get to church to focus that prayer. When they are there, they find the church as bare as possible, as silent as possible, with the tabernacle opened and empty.

The Liturgy of the Lord's Passion will be held at our parish at 1 PM. It begins with a **silent entrance**. That in itself is a bit remarkable. But the conduct of the priest when he enters church is simply to **prostrate** himself on the floor, a cue for the congregation to kneel, in prayer. After a time of silence, the priest stands (the congregation remain kneeling) and says a stark opening prayer. Then the Liturgy of the Word begins as usual. But the Gospel is not "as usual"; it is **a proclamation of the Passion story** from the Gospel according to **Saint John**.

After the homily come the **solemn prayers of intercession**. These are basically the same as the prayer of the faithful said every day at Mass, but today they are more inclusive of our deepest needs and more formal, and they are structured by • an announcement of the intention, • followed by our kneeling to pray in silence, and • the actual statement of the prayer.

Then comes the **veneration of the Cross**. The deacon leaves the sanctuary to go to the entrance of the church and retrieves a cross which he carries in solemnly, three times chanting, "**This is the wood of the cross on which hung the savior of the world,**" to which the people respond, three times chanting, "**Thanks be to God!**" Then all the people present come forward to venerate the cross with a kiss.

The last part of the Good Friday Liturgy is **Holy Communion**. The Blessed Sacrament was consecrated the previous evening with enough extra hosts for Communion today, which were kept in a quiet place of repose. The deacon again leaves the sanctuary to retrieve these hosts for distribution to the faithful. Communion is under only one species today (but we fully receive the Body and the Blood of Christ, even though it is under the species of the Bread only). We receive with a special reverence, since we are more conscious than ever of the wondrous love the Lord is expressing in this gift.

After the remains of the Eucharist are returned to the place of repose, Father says a concluding prayer and then departs in silence. Then after a few moments of prayer **we can depart in silence**. This is a time not for socializing but for earnest prayer.

The Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday Night

There is no liturgy all day Saturday, not until after dark on Saturday. In our parish the liturgy is at 9 PM. The liturgy of the Easter Vigil is **the most important—and most beautiful—of all the year**. It is also the longest, lasting about two hours. But, for those who come in a spirit of prayer, the time is really not a major factor (for any but the handicapped and small children).

It is a “vigil” because it is a staying awake and keeping alert. We have funeral *vigils* and *vigilantes* and we keep *vigil* at the bedside of a feverish person. When it’s a vigil of love, *emphasis is on the one we are watching, not on the effort that watchers put into it*.

Next Saturday we keep the vigil of the resurrection. It is told of Abba Arsenius, one of the ancient Egyptian desert fathers, that, to prepare for the glory of Sunday, each Saturday at sunset “he would turn his back on the sun” and stretch out his hands in prayer, standing and praying, “till once again the sun shone on his face.” At sunrise he would not merely greet the rising sun, but would celebrate the Easter joy of the rising Lord. “Then,” we are told, “he would sit down.”

I don’t recommend that you try that at home. Those desert fathers sometimes turned acts of devotion into extraordinarily arduous acts of self-denial. But there was often to what they did a point that is instructive for the rest of the Holy Mother the Church. What Abba Arsenius did has something to do with the ardent watchfulness of Christians, especially at the Easter Vigil, focused as it is on the eager attentiveness to the rising Lord.

We begin outside, in front of church, in darkness and silence. The priest lights the **Easter fire** (the very same act Saint Patrick risked his life for more than fifteen hundred years ago on Holy Saturday night on the hill of Slane in Ireland!). The **Easter candle** is lighted. The people receive lights for their own candles and follow the Easter candle into church. This is done in a **solemn procession**. Most of us are not used to “solemn processions,” but they aren’t hard to learn. We stay grouped close together and move very slowly—even our movensament is part of our prayer. We all go all the way to the front of church (where we usually receive Holy Communion), then bow and turn to go slowly to our places (as we would after Communion).

When everyone is in place, the deacon, standing in the light of the Easter candle, proclaims the *Exsultet*, the great Easter chant of praise to God for the wondrous thing that he has accomplished on this holy night. Here is a brief snatch of what he proclaims:

**Rejoice, heavenly powers!
Sing choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation**

**around God’s throne!
Jesus Christ, our King is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!**

**Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes forever!**

**Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Savior shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God’s people!**

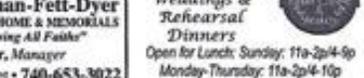
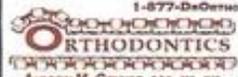
Having lit our Easter fire, each taken a spark from that fire for our own Easter candle, and heard the chanted proclamation of the *Exsultet*, it is time to sit, by the light of the Easter candle, and listen to a set of readings from Scripture. This night we will listen to the story of our salvation in an outline that comes to us from the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. After each of those there will be a psalm and a prayer. When the five Old Testament readings are concluded we will stand, turn on all the lights, ring some bells, uncover some shrouded statues, and sing a *Gloria*. Then we will sit for the Easter reflection of St Paul and stand for a special singing of the *Alleluia* (for the first time since Mardi Gras!) and for the spare but beautiful Easter Gospel of St Mark.

After the Gospel we will be renewed in the Easter sacraments. There will be a solemn blessing of the **baptismal water** (that’s what holy water is holy for!) and, after we have all renewed our baptismal vows, we will be sprinkled with this water of new life in which we were baptized. There is a real sense in which, whatever was the actual date of our baptism (mine was in July), this is our shared anniversary of baptism. It is the night when the power of the waters of Baptism was put into gear, so to speak, by the rising of Jesus. St Paul puts the relation between the resurrection and Baptism emphatically in tonight’s Epistle reading:

we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

Although we have no one to be baptized this night, we do receive into full communion with the Catholic Church—and I have the privilege of giving the sacrament of Confirmation, the seal of the Holy Spirit to – Savannah Dalton, a baptized Christian who has, for most of a year, been preparing for this night. When Mass continues as usual one special additional thing happens: Savannah will receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time. Even those of us who cannot attend this Easter Vigil are joined in prayer for her and for ourselves and each other who have celebrated our annual renewal in this divine life.

—Father Kessler

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