

Homily for the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

11 April 2020

Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

“Dear brothers and sisters on this most sacred night, in which our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life, the Church calls upon her sons and daughters, scattered throughout the world to come together to watch and pray. If we keep the memorial of the Lord’s paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God.”

Christ yesterday and today

The Beginning and the End

The Alpha

And the Omega

All time belongs to him

And all the ages

To him be glory and power

Through every age and forever. Amen.

By his holy

And glorious wounds,

May Christ the Lord

Guard us

And protect us. Amen.

**May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our heart
and minds.**

Reading 1 – Genesis 1:1-2:2

Reading 2 – Genesis 22:1-18

Reading 3 – Exodus 14:15-15:1

Reading 4 – Isaiah 54:5-14

Reading 5 – Isaiah 55:1-11

Reading 6 – Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

Reading 7 – Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28

Epistle – Romans 6:3-11

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel – Matthew 28:1-10

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“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, after forty days of Lent we have finally arrived at the evening that we have been all preparing for, the great solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord. This night has always been special to me, because as a convert it was at Easter Vigil at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Albany where I received the Easter Sacraments. I was baptized, confirmed and received my first Holy Communion. Since, then the Easter Vigil has been my favorite celebration in the entire Church year. Sadly, this year we are not able to gather as the body of Christ to hear these amazing readings that are proclaimed each year and most importantly, we are not able to gather with our elect and candidates to welcome them into the Church. We will do that

later on in the Easter season or whenever we are able to resume our public Masses again.

This celebration of the Easter Vigil actually began on Thursday evening with the celebration of the Lord's supper and concludes this Holy Saturday night. We begin the Triduum on Thursday, celebrating the institution of the priesthood and the Holy Eucharist. Friday continued with the reading of the Passion and the veneration of the Cross and today we light the great pillar of fire, the new Easter candle from the newly blessed Easter fire. This light will burn brightly in the year to come radiating Christ and his light along our paths each and every day of our lives.

The readings that we encounter tonight tell us the story of our salvation. These ancient texts remind us of our creation and that God created us out of nothing, the dirt, the earth. We had a relationship with him, but that quickly ended when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and did the one thing that he told them not to do. We hear of how God lead his people out of Egypt and set them free along the Red Sea road and then lead them out into the desert. We hear from the prophets that with enduring love, the Lord has taken pity on us. He calls us to walk towards him and the way of life that he has revealed to us. He reminds us that he will sprinkle clean water upon us so that we can be made clean and receive the new heart that he has prepared to give us. This heart is the Sacred Heart of his Son. Jesus was sent into our world to die for us so that we can live forever. The water of baptism will wash away our sins and if we follow the Lord and his ways, we will live forever. All of this is because God loves us more then we can every understand.

We see this love in the gospel that we encounter this night. Yesterday in the reading of the Passion of Christ according to John we ended with Jesus being laid in the new tomb and a stone having been rolled in front of the tomb, in effect sealing him in. The guard wanted to make sure that the disciples were not going to try something by taking the body. What do we find at the tomb this evening in the gospel? The stone has been rolled away and there they an angel instead of Jesus. The angel replies; "Do not be afraid." These words are of great comfort to the women that came to the tomb that first Easter morning.

These words of are great comfort to us. This Easter is very different from Easters past, our churches are empty, but we must remember, so is the tomb. Jesus rose from the dead! There is nothing to be afraid of. There is nothing to be afraid of during this pandemic, we must always put our trust in the Risen Lord and know that his victory over death will extend even over COVID-19. Do not be afraid!

Our time during Lent has led us to Easter Sunday where we typically renew our baptismal promises at Easter Sunday Mass. This is the purpose of Lent, for us to prepare ourselves to once again renew our baptismal promises. While we will certainly do this once we can officially gather again for public Mass, but for this night, let us still renew our promises wherever we may happen to be right now:

Dear brothers and sisters, through the Paschal Mystery we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, so that we may walk with him in newness of life. And so, now that our Lenten observance is concluded, let us renew the promises of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and his works and promised to serve God and the Holy Catholic Church.

And so I ask you:

Do you renounce Satan?

And all his works?

And all his empty promises?

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

And may almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and bestowed on us the

forgiveness of our sins, keep is by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord, for eternal life. AMEN.

My brothers and sisters, these promises and the life that we receive from these promises is all about God's love for us. He sent us his Son so that we will have eternal life. God never promises to us that life will be easy here. Life is tough, it will always have its ups and downs. Right now, we are in the midst of a pandemic and we may be scared and confused but God and his love are still here, keeping us safe. No, it is not easy, but God gives us what we need. We may not be able to gather together for Mass, but Mass is still being celebrated all over the world and his grace and blessings are still pouring out on each and every one of you every day as all of you remembered in my prayers at the altar. Grace is still flowing out. Do not be afraid!

My brothers and Sisters, Christ has risen from the dead! Let us celebrate and rejoice! The Lord is risen! Alleluia! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!