

# Great Vigil of Easter

*Suggestions and portions adapted by Dr. James Farwell, Virginia Theological Seminary*

*Anyone, lay or ordained, may lead or read any part of this service. Different people can take turns with leadership.*

*This service is intended for anytime between sunset on Easter Eve and sunrise on Easter Day.*

## The Lighting of New Fire

Beloved in Christ: On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church invites her members, dispersed throughout the world, to linger in vigil and prayer. For this is the Passover of the Lord in which, by virtue of our baptism into his death, into the hope of his resurrection, we celebrate the New Life we have received by his Mercy, awaiting the time when we may gather again around your holy altar.

*In darkness, a fire is kindled and a candle is lighted.*

Let us pray.

O God, you have bestowed upon your people the brightness of your light: Sanctify this new fire, and grant that we may so burn with heavenly desires, that with pure minds we may attain to the festival of everlasting light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Exsultet – *Sing it or say all!*

Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels, and let your trumpets shout Salvation for the victory of our mighty King.

Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth, bright with a glorious splendor, for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King.

Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church, and let your holy courts, in radiant light, resound with the praises of your people.

*One* The Lord be with you.

*All* And also with you.

*One* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*All* It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our whole heart and mind and voice, to praise you, the invisible, almighty, and eternal God, and your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who at the feast of the Passover paid for us the debt of Adam's sin, and by his blood delivered your faithful people.

This is the night, when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God, is your mercy and loving-kindness to us, that to redeem a slave, you gave a Son.

How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight, and sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and man is (*or we are*) reconciled to God.

Holy Father, accept our living sacrifice of this candle in your honor.

May Christ, the light of the world, bring us healing.

May Christ, your light in us, drive away darkness and fear.

May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find our faith ever burning, our love of mercy and justice ever afire – he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

*A series of readings follows. You may read as few as two or as many as nine. The reading from Exodus is required. A song or psalm and prayer may follow each reading – the ones indicated here or others of your choosing.*

*Get creative! The Genesis narrative can be read by many voices. Find two dramatic voices to take the parts of the prophet and God in the Valley of Dry Bones.*

*The story of Creation*

Genesis 1:1--2:2

*Song - or - Psalm 33:1-11, or Psalm 36:5-10*

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The Flood*

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

*Song - or - Psalm 46*

Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Almighty God, you have placed in the skies the sign of your covenant with all living things: Grant that we, who are saved through water and the Spirit, may worthily offer to you our sacrifice of thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac*  
Genesis 22:1-18

*Song - or - Psalm 33:12-22, or Psalm 16*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

God and Father of all believers, for the glory of your Name multiply, by the grace of the Paschal sacrament, the number of your children; that your Church may rejoice to see fulfilled your promise to our father Abraham; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Required Reading: Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea*  
Exodus 14:10--15:1

*Song - or - Canticle 8, The Song of Moses (BCP, p. 85)*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, whose wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day, you once delivered by the power of your mighty arm your chosen people from slavery under Pharaoh, to be a sign for us of the salvation of all nations by the water of Baptism: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may be numbered among the offspring of Abraham, and rejoice in the inheritance of Israel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*God's Presence in a renewed Israel*  
Isaiah 4:2-6

*Song - or - Psalm 122*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, you led your ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant that we, who serve you now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where all tears are wiped away and where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Salvation offered freely to all*  
Isaiah 55:1-11

*Song - or - Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah (BCP, p. 86), or Psalm 42:1-7*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God, you have created all things by the power of your Word, and you renew the earth by your Spirit: Give now the water of life to those who thirst for you, that they may bring forth abundant fruit in your glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*A new heart and a new spirit*  
Ezekiel 36:24-28

*Song - or - Psalm 42:1-7, or Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah (BCP, p. 86)*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who are reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The valley of dry bones*  
Ezekiel 37:1-14

*Song - or - Psalm 30, or Psalm 143*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

Almighty God, by the Passover of your Son you have brought us out of sin into righteousness and out of death into life: Grant to those who are sealed by your Holy Spirit the will and the power to proclaim you to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The gathering of God's People*  
Zephaniah 3:12-20

*Song - or - Psalm 98, or Psalm 126*

Let us pray. *(Silence)*

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Then, Proclaim the Resurrection! Any other candles may be lighted. Other lights may be turned on.*

*The following may be said, and may be repeated three or more times, if desired, increasing in volume each time.*

*One* Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*All* **The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

*Bells or other joyful noises may be made. The Pascha nostrum (BCP, p. 83), or the Gloria in excelsis (BCP, p. 94), or the Te Deum laudamus (BCP, p. 95) may be sung or said – or some other Easter hymn or song.*

*One* The Lord be with you. (*or* God be with you.)

*All* **And also with you.**

*One* Let us pray.

*One of the following Collects is said*

Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*or this*

O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Reader* A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.  
*Romans 6:3-11*

*Reader* The Word of the Lord. (or Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.)

*All* Thanks be to God.

*"Alleluia" may be sung and repeated, using whatever song is familiar.*

*Reader* A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.  
*Matthew 28:1-10*

*Reader* The Word of the Lord. (or Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.)

*All* Thanks be to God.

### **The Renewal of Baptismal Vows**

*One* Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?  
*All* **I do.**

*One* Do you believe in God the Father?  
*All* **I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

*One* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?  
*All* **I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

*One* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

*All* **I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.**

*One* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*One* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*One* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*One* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

*One* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

*All* **I will, with God's help.**

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

*Invite prayers for all in need. Spend some time with prayer.*

*The Lord's Prayer*

*You may conclude, then, with the other Easter Collect (above on p. 5) that you did not use earlier, and then with this ending, crafted by the Rev. Josephine Robertson and the Rev. Joseph Peters-Matthews.*

*One* Alleluia! Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us!

*All* **Therefore let us keep the feast! Alleluia!**

*One* When we share our bread with one another

*All* **The Lamb of God will make us one.**

*You may continue the celebration with a festive meal!*