

## Homily - Easter Vigil 2024

Light has broken through the darkness of death.

The stone is rolled away, and the shadows of suffering are dispelled.

It is true. Jesus Christ has risen, and death itself holds no power over him.

My friends, on this blessed night, we relive the majesty and the drama of salvation history.

We walk from the inception of the universe itself, through the birth of God's chosen people, and the hope and suffering they endured as they awaited their Messiah.

We have waited with them, journeyed with them throughout the forty long days of Lent, been purified with them in the spiritual deserts of penance and fasting, and now...

Now we witness with them the triumph of our Redeemer.

With his victory over sin and death, now broken beneath his feet as he rises to glory, Our Lord has opened the path to new life.

Throughout these days and nights of prayer and longing, we have confronted our own sins, doubts, and longings, and now we see them brought to healing and fulfillment through the power of the Resurrection.

The Gospel is proclaimed again, as for the very first time:

Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, alleluia!

This liturgy, this night of prayer which the Church speaks of as the mother of all Vigils, reveals the heart of our identity as Christians - a people chosen by God himself as his sons and daughters, chosen to share in the freedom won for us by our Savior.

This ultimate freedom was foreshadowed in the Lord's intervention as he led his people out of slavery.

The Israelite people, passing through the waters of the Red Sea, prefigured the salvation that would be given to us through the waters of baptism itself.

This beautiful sacrament, celebrated for the Church's Elect on this night of grace, unites us to the Lord's Body and fills us with that same light of faith imaged in this Easter candle.

Brothers and sisters, this is what it means to be a Christian.

If this event we relive tonight, Christ's dying and rising from the dead, were not real - our faith would be madness.

But here, tonight, it unfolds before us in all of its mystery and power.

Here, we will see our own catechumens called to the baptismal waters, sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and united in Holy Communion to the Body of the Church.

They will be joined, remade, and sent forth as members of the faithful, and we will join them in the renewal given to us in prayer and sacrament.

We will renew the promises of our own baptism, reaffirm our commitment to our renunciation of sin and the teachings of our fathers in the faith, and be restored by our Lord's own Body and Blood.

On this night of grace, we return to the heart of our identity - who we are, and who we were made to be for eternity.

In this Vigil, our Lord invites us to set aside so many of the burdens that we have carried with us throughout our lives and throughout these days of prayer and penitence.

We are distracted. Pulled in so many directions. Afflicted by sorrow, by worry, and by the burdens and obligations of daily life and our own wounds and imperfection.

In the joy of this Easter night, our Lord invites us, very simply: let him remake you.

Let his love and grace, now victorious over death, be the foundation upon which your life rests.

Renew your commitment to live with gratitude for the gift he has given us, and with the apostolic courage born from the sure knowledge that he is truly risen.

Many of us will be asked, directly or not, why we are Christians.

Why do we hold on to our faith, in the face of evil and suffering and doubt?

Tonight, Our Lord wants to answer that question.

He is here, here in Word and Sacrament, just as truly as he was present to his Apostles, and as truly as he rolled away the stone of the tomb - here to reveal the meaning of the freedom he has won for each one of us, and to invite us to be renewed.

Together, then, let us join in prayer for these our young catechumens, who will now receive this gift for the first time, and pray also for ourselves, that through the truth and power of his Resurrection, we will be filled with his light.