

Easter Vigil

Liturgy of the Word

C = Commentator N = Narrator G = Voice of God Cel = Presiding celebrant

Cel: **T**onight, on this greatest of all feasts,
we celebrate the rising of Christ our true light
who puts out the darkness of sin and death.
This rising of Jesus Christ is not an isolated event in time.
It is rather the culmination of the history of God's loving care for a people.
In tonight's vigil,
as we watch in the dark for the coming of the light of the first day of the week,
we take time to go right back to the beginning.
We hear the story of God's love at the creation of this world,
to remember who we are as a people God has called.
We listen to just a few parts of the story
leading up to the Good News of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ
and the new life in him which we celebrate tonight.
Let us listen prayerfully as we now recall these events
leading up to Christ's Rising, which is also our rising to new life.

Genesis 1

C: **A**t the very beginning, when God created humankind on this earth,
the Scriptures tell us that God made us in love.
Our first account from the book of Genesis
is not a scientific account.
It is a great poem, a hymn of praise,
to remind us that this world we share
is itself a promise of God's love and mercy.

N: In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,
there was darkness over the deep.
God's spirit hovered over the water;
and God spoke the word and said:

G: **Let there be light!** *(Spoken deliberately, with emphasis)*

N: **And there was light!**
And on this, the first day, God saw that it was good.

C: God put a vault between the waters above and the waters below.
And there was evening; and there was morning, the second day.

N: God divided the land from the seas and commanded the land to produce plants and fruit. And there was evening; and there was morning, the third day.

C: God made the great light to govern the day and the smaller light to govern the night.
And there was evening; and there was morning, the fourth day.

N: God brought forth all the creatures of land and sea and sky.
And there was evening; and there was morning, the fifth day.

C: On the sixth day, God said:

G: Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness.
Let them have stewardship over the fish of the sea,
the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals
and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.

N: God created humankind in the image and likeness of God;
in the divine image we human beings were created;
male and female, God created us.
God blessed humankind saying:

G: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.
Have stewardship over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,
and all living things that move on the earth.
See I give you every seed bearing plant over the earth
and every tree that has seed bearing fruit on it to be your food;
and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air,
and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground,
I give you the green plants for food.

N: And so it was. God looked at everything that was made
and indeed found it *VERY* good.
Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.
And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done,
and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

(Short pause)



The word of the Lord. *(Commentator, Narrator, Voice of God, together)*



Choir sings: *Send forth your Spirit, O Lord*

Cel: Let us stand and pray. *(Pause)*

Almighty and eternal God, you created all things
in wonderful beauty and order.
Help us now to perceive how still more wonderful
is the new creation by which in the fullness of time
you redeemed your people through the sacrifice of our Passover,
Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exodus 14

C: **A**s the centuries rolled on,
God entered even more intimately into the life of humanity,
mysteriously challenging, summoning, loving, and forgiving.
Abraham learned the meaning of faith
in this infinitely powerful, yet infinitely gentle God.
This God of mystery chose a people,
the descendants of Abraham and Sarah.
God showed them with love and care that their God was a saving God.

N: The Book of Exodus tell us that when they were slaves in Egypt,
God was still faithful, and said to Moses:

G: I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt;
I have heard their cry.... I know their sufferings,
and I have come to deliver them...
The cry of the Israelites has come to me
I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.

N: Under the leadership of Moses,
the LORD freed his people from bondage.
The LORD led them from Egypt and said to Moses:

G: Why do you cry out to me?
Tell the Israelites to go forward. But you lift up your staff,
and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it
that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.

N: Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.
The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night,
and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.
The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground.
Israel saw the great work that the LORD.
So the people were in awe of the LORD
and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.
It was then that Moses and the children of Israel
sang this song in honour of the Lord.

(Short pause)

C: We sing that song of the people set free.



Choir sings: *'I will sing to the Lord, glorious his triumph'.*

Cel: Let us stand and pray: *(Pause)*
Mighty God, in this new covenant,
you shed light on the miracles you worked in ancient times.
The Red Sea is a symbol of our baptism.
The nation you freed from slavery is a sign of your Christian people.

May every nation share the faith and privilege of Israel
and come to new birth in the Holy Spirit.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All are seated.

Isaiah 54

C: **T**he Chosen People sometimes remembered God's promises to them,
but often forgot and strayed from God's path.
Again and again, their God would challenge them,
punish them but always save them from bondage.
Through the prophets,
God kept the word of salvation alive for the people.

N: We now listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah
speaking of God in very human terms,
and assuring the people of God's love for them.
Thus says the Lord:

G: I did forsake you for a brief moment,
but with great love I will take you back.
In excess of anger, for a moment I hid my face from you.
But with everlasting love I have taken pity on you.
I am now as I was in the days of Noah
when I swore that Noah's waters should never flood the world again.
For the mountains may depart, the hills may be shaken
but my love for you will never leave you
and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken.

(Short pause)



The word of the Lord.



Choir sings: *'Preserve me God I take refuge in you'*

Cel: Let us stand and pray: *(Pause)*

Almighty and eternal God, glorify your name
by increasing your chosen people as you promised long ago.
In reward for their trust may we see in your church
the fulfilment of your promise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

All are seated

Isaiah 55

N: **G**od then issued this pressing invitation,
again through the prophet Isaiah.
As we heard of God's word at Creation in our first reading,
so now again we hear the word of hope.

G: All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat;
Come without paying and at no cost, drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread:
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Listen! Listen to me, and you shall delight in rich fare.
Listen that you may have life.
With you I will make an everlasting covenant.
Seek God who may be found!

N: Call God who is near!
Let scoundrels forsake their ways, and the wicked their thoughts.
Let them turn for mercy to our God, who is generous in forgiveness.

G: For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are my ways your ways – it is the LORD who speaks to you.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.
Just as from the heavens and rain and snow come down
and do not return there till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the sower, and bread to those who eat,
so shall the word be that goes forth from my mouth.
It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

(Short pause)



The word of the Lord.



Choir sings: *'Like the deer that yearns for running streams'*

Cel: We have heard these stories many times before.
It is good to remember them once again and to relive them:
they are part of our own story.
We have been baptised in the life of the Crucified and Risen Christ.
We now understand the call to live lives
in the service of the Kingdom of God.
We experience our lives as a pilgrimage,
a journey and exodus out of darkness into freedom and light.
We sense ourselves as having been brought back from exile

through the life, death and Resurrection of Christ
into the bright promise of a new hope.
This is the night, the great night of our salvation!
This night, Christ is risen and alive! Christ is risen indeed!
Let us rejoice and give glory to God in the highest!

Gloria!



Bells

Lights



*During the Gloria the altar is dressed.
Altar candles are lit from the Pascal candle.*

R: A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

6:3-11

When we were baptised in Christ Jesus
we were baptised in his death;
in other words, when we were baptised
we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory,
we too might live a new life.

If in union with Christ we have imitated his death,
we shall also imitate him in his resurrection.
We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with him
to destroy this sinful body
and to free us from the slavery of sin.
When a Christian dies, of course, he has finished with sin.

But we believe that having died with Christ
we shall return to life with him:
Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead
will never die again.
Death has no power over him any more.
When he died, he died, once for all, to sin,
so his life now is life with God;
and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin
but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

(Short pause)

The word of the Lord.

Alleluia!