

The Easter Vigil

Environment

Prepare the place of prayer with a suitable “focus center.” Remember that the liturgical color of the day is white. If you are in a community that reserves the Blessed Sacrament, perhaps gather in that place (if so, the Blessed Sacrament is not present; perhaps the tabernacle or vessel open). Have a bowl of water, some sort of green, a large new candle, and one new smaller candle for each person present. Make sure everyone has a comfortable place to sit.

Beginning

The leader calls everyone into silence

After a suitable amount of time, the leader continues:

Our celebration of the Triduum began on Thursday night. It reaches its climax tonight with the celebration of the Vigil. Again, perhaps put yourself in the place where you have celebrated the Triduum before; perhaps recall our celebration together last year, when we were on retreat together.

pause

At the Vigil, we have a lot to do: see the new fire, reminding us that Jesus is the light, the light of the entire world. We share the light with one another.

(Here, light the large candle, and then invite everyone to light their candles from the center candle. Everyone hold their candles as the leader continues.)

(Read this as a “guided meditation.”)

We listen to the Exultet proclaimed: rejoice! Jesus has abolished the darkness, once and for all! this is the night!; we listen to the scripture stories that tell us the whole of our salvation history. We renew our baptismal promises, and once again, we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Blessed Sacrament is returned to its place.

(Slight pause, and then begin music:)

Music: Christ Be Our Light, Vigil Text

The leader invites everyone to place their lighted candles at the focus center, and continues:

Liturgy of the Word

Let us listen to a reading from the Book of Genesis:

(A different person should proclaim each reading, if possible.)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,
God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
Let them have dominion 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."
God created man in his image;
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
God blessed them, saying:
"Be fertile and multiply;
fill the earth and subdue it.
Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,
and all the living things that move on the earth."
God also said:
"See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all 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 all the green plants for food."
And so it happened.
God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.

Music Response: Lord Send Out Your Spirit

(after a slight pause, the second reader begins ...)

A reading from the Book of Exodus:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,
and the LORD swept the sea
with a strong east wind throughout the night
and so turned it into dry land.
When the water was thus divided,
the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land,
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

The Egyptians followed in pursuit;
all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers went after them
right into the midst of the sea.
In the night watch just before dawn
the LORD cast through the column of the fiery cloud
upon the Egyptian force a glance that threw it into a panic;
and he so clogged their chariot wheels
that they could hardly drive.
With that the Egyptians sounded the retreat before Israel,
because the LORD was fighting for them against the Egyptians.

Thus the LORD saved Israel on that day
from the power of the Egyptians.
When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore
and beheld the great power that the LORD
had shown against the Egyptians,
they feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:
I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

Music Response: Exodus 15

(after a slight pause, the next reader begins ...)

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD:
All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,

Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call him while he is near.
Turn to the LORD for mercy;
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For just as from the heavens
the 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 one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

Music Response: With Joy You Shall Draw Water

(after a slight pause, the next reader begins:)

A reading from the book of the prophet, Ezekiel

Thus says the Lord GOD:

Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel,
but for the sake of my holy name,
which you profaned among the nations to which you came.
I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations,
in whose midst you have profaned it.
Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD,
when in their sight I prove my holiness through you.
For I will take you away from among the nations,
gather you from all the foreign lands,
and bring you back to your own land.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.
I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.
You shall live in the land I gave your fathers;
you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Music Response: Create in me a clean heart O God (Psalm 51)

(after a slight pause, the next reader begins)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:
Are you unaware that 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.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his,
we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

(after a slight pause, the leader stands, indicating all should stand)

Leader: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

All: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to Matthew
(the leader should read the Gospel)

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.
And behold, there was a great earthquake;
for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven,
approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.

His appearance was like lightning
and his clothing was white as snow.
The guards were shaken with fear of him
and became like dead men.
Then the angel said to the women in reply,
“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.
Come and see the place where he lay.
Then go quickly and tell his disciples,
‘He has been raised from the dead,
and he is going before you to Galilee;
there you will see him.’
Behold, I have told you.”
Then they went away quickly from the tomb,
fearful yet overjoyed,
and ran to announce this to his disciples.
And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.
They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.
Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid.
Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,
and there they will see me.”

Perhaps take a few moments for sharing

Leader: We continue our solemn prayer tonight with the renewal of our baptismal promises.

(Lift some water from bowl and let it drip to create sound of water.)

The leader continues:

First, we bless the water.

(the leader invites everyone to extend their hands over the water)

Leader:

Dear Sisters, let us humbly ask our loving God to bless this ✠ water with which we will bless ourselves as a memorial of our Baptism. May God graciously renew us, so that we remain faithful to our promises.

(pause)

Now, let us recommit ourselves to God as we renew our baptismal promises. Once again, we reject all evil and promise to serve God faithfully. What cause for celebration! We say again our YES!

The leader takes her candle, indicating for everyone to take theirs. Holding our candles, we renew our baptismal promises:

Baptismal Promises

Leader: Do you renounce Satan, and all his works and empty promises?

All: I do.

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

All: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only 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?

All: I do.

Leader: 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?

All: I do.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All: Amen.

After the renewal of our promises, each person goes to the focus center and places their candle and then blesses themselves with the water (the leader should model this).

Music Response: Up From The Waters

The Leader continues:

And united as one body in Christ, we would continue the celebration of the Eucharist - as we do each week when we gather in community to hear the Word, to break the Bread and drink the Cup, and to be sent out in service to carry out the mission of Jesus our Christ. Every Eucharist is a remembering of the passion, death and resurrection but tonight is the full celebration of this great mystery of salvation.

(pause)

Let us take some silence, now, to reflect on what we've experienced, what or who we are missing, and how the "little deaths" we have experienced over these days of seclusion and

isolation have been opportunities for grace. How the emptiness we might feel could be a space for God to fill with love and compassion, and a new or renewed sense of community.

After a suitable amount of silence, the leader continues:

These three days have been a privileged time for us. Each of the liturgies on which we have meditated illuminates a different emphasis on the one great mystery we celebrate during these days. By retreating into these liturgies we *remember* and *make present* the full nature of Jesus' living.

Music Closing: Christ the Lord is Risen Today