



HOLY SATURDAY

Holy Saturday is a day of patient waiting when we, as Church, prayerfully reflect on the passion and death of Christ and await his resurrection. It is a day of fast as we ready ourselves for the feast of Easter.

The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

The Easter Vigil is rich in symbol and ritual action. While we will not experience it in quite the same way this year, it typically unfolds as follows, in four parts. The celebration begins around the light of the Easter fire. The fire is blessed, the Easter Candle is lit and this light is shared before we sing our great proclamation of Easter, the Exsultet. In the second part of the night we vigil with the stories of our salvation, the great stories from the Old Testament proclaimed in the light of our Easter faith and culminating in the proclamation of the resurrection in the Gospel reading. Now in the third part we are ready to do what our whole Lenten journey has been about – to welcome new members in baptism and to renew our own baptism before we complete our celebration of the vigil with the Liturgy of the Eucharist in which we receive the nourishment and grace of the Body of Christ to sustain us in the Christian journey.

On this greatest of nights in the life of the Church we keep vigil with the Lord. Although this year's Vigil cannot be celebrated in all its richness, in the darkness of these days we can dare to rejoice. Because, through the resurrection, the risen Lord has conquered all darkness and overcome the power of death.

Scripture tells us

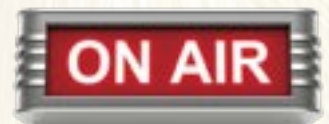
The angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would.' (Matthew 28:5-6)



Deepening our participation in the broadcast celebration

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- On a table or in the sacred space, place an unlit candle in the centre with an individual candle beside it for each person who has gathered. People might like to use their own baptism candle if they have it. Include a bible, if you have one, open on Genesis 1 and a bowl of water and a small branch of greenery. If there are flowers in the garden you might have some in a vase close by.



During the broadcast look out for the following:

- This year's vigil will likely start with the **lighting of the Easter candle** and the three fold acclamation: *The Light of Christ*. When this is completed light your centre candle and invite people to take up their (baptism) candle, light it and hold it for the Exsultet, the Easter proclamation.
- Listen closely to the words of the **Exsultet**. Having moved from darkness to light, its words and music are used to praise and thank God for what the light represents: God's saving activity throughout human history, culminating in Christ's defeat of death and resurrection from the dead.
- As the **Readings** begin, place your candles on the table beside the bible. In these readings you will hear of God's care for us in the acts of creation as well as the saving

events of the Exodus and throughout the history of God's people, culminating in the resurrection account. St Paul reminds us that we share in Christ's death and resurrection through our baptism.

- Look out for the singing of the **Gloria** (like on Holy Thursday, during it you can ring bells if you have them) and, especially, the return of the **Alleluia** which hopefully we will all join in singing on this night, wherever we are. During the singing of the Alleluia you may wish to place flowers beside the bible and turn the bible to the Gospel reading, Matthew 28:1-10.
- While at this year's vigil we sadly cannot celebrate baptisms, we can still **renew our baptismal promises**. As these promises are led by the priest, take up your candle and renew the promises made for you in baptism – this is our faith, the faith of the Church and we are proud to profess it.
- After you renew these promises you may wish to take the bowl of water and make a sign of the cross upon yourself with the water or, using a small branch of greenery, sprinkle those gathered with water as a **reminder of our baptism**.
- As we pray the **Prayer of the Faithful** may we do so in a spirit of Easter confidence in the Lord who has conquered all evil.
- As you make your **Act of Spiritual Communion** take time to thank God for the gift of your baptism and for the gift of hope your baptism brings to your life.
- At the end of this celebration, take your main candle and place it safely in the window of your home as a beacon of **Easter hope** to the world.
- And remember to continue the **feast!** Be kind to yourself and treat yourself to something special in honour of this great night.

A night-time Prayer Ritual at Home

Gather with other members of your household, if you can.

Prepare a table or a sacred space, with an unlit candle in the centre with an individual candle beside it for each person who has gathered. People might like to use their own baptism candle if they have it. Include a bible, if you have one, open on Genesis 1, as well as a jug of water, a small branch of greenery and an empty bowl.



Lighting of the Candle

At the beginning of this prayer ritual, people may wish, if they can, to go out to their garden and into the darkness of the night.

One person lights the main candle and says the following:

May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds, and bring us hope, peace and newness of life.

*Then lighting each household member's candle in turn, says: **The light of Christ with the response as each candle is lit: Thanks be to God.***

Quiet reflection

Take a moment to look upon the flame of your candle and consider what it means for you to welcome Christ as the light of your life on this night.

Opening Prayer

On this blessed night we give you thanks, Lord God,
that your light has come into our world to overcome the darkness.
May its flame burn ever bright in our hearts
that we may be filled everyday with the joy of our Easter faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The lit candles can now be placed beside the bible.

Reading

Before the Gospel reading is proclaimed those gathered may wish to welcome it once more with a familiar sung Alleluia.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

After the sabbath, and toward dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre ... But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him.' Now I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection

'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would.' These words bring us to the deepest truth of our faith. In Jesus' passage from death to life, we are redeemed, we are saved, we are given the promise of fullness of life in God. Through our baptism and our belief in the resurrection, our fears, our doubts, our lives are transformed. Easter faith invites us to welcome the gift of this transformation into the core of our being. On this night we can begin again. Yet we can only do this by welcoming the risen Lord, Christ who is our guiding light, into our lives. As Pope Francis reminds us 'We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars'. (Words from special blessing on 27 March) On this night we proclaim Christ as our morning star who never sets, our light and our way who guides us along the true path.

Ritual Action

A remembrance of baptism

On this night we remember the gift of our baptism in which we come to share in Christ's

journey from death to new life. Through the words of Pope Francis may we begin to touch the depth of the meaning of baptism in our lives.

Some water is poured from the jug into the bowl each time a quote from Pope Francis has been shared:

- Baptism is the best gift we have received. Through it we belong to God and we possess the joy of salvation. *As water is poured we respond: **Blessed be God for ever.***
- We are called to live our baptism every day, as new creatures, clothed in Christ. *As water is poured we respond: **Blessed be God for ever.***
- With the grace of baptism and eucharistic communion, I can become an instrument of God's mercy, of that beautiful mercy of God. *As water is poured we respond: **Blessed be God for ever.***
- All of the baptised must announce Jesus with our life, with our witness, and with our words. *As water is poured we respond: **Blessed be God for ever.***
- In the end, every Christian man and woman, by virtue of baptism has received a mission. Each one of us has to respond, as best we can, to the Lord's call to build up his Body, the Church. *As water is poured we respond: **Blessed be God for ever.***

Each person is invited to take the bowl of water and make a sign of the cross upon themselves with the water or, if more appropriate or safer to do so using a small branch of greenery, those gathered can be sprinkled with water.

Intercessions

We take a moment to unite in prayer with the Church across the world on this night, remembering especially those preparing for Easter baptism who must wait a while longer this year. We pray for our needs and the needs of the world this day. We remember in our prayer... *(Bring your intentions to God)* **Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.**

Our Father ...

Final acclamation

Together we acclaim: Jesus Christ is risen. Alleluia, alleluia!

Sign of the Cross ...

Light in the window

*At the end of this prayer take your main candle and place it safely in the window of your home as a beacon of **Easter hope** to the world.*

To do

Set aside 20 minutes to declutter some space and do a mini spring clean – it might be that sock drawer or kitchen drawer you keeping meaning to do; listen to some reflective music; do some family baking to prepare some treats for Easter Sunday; make an Easter card for someone you are missing so you can send them a picture of it tomorrow.