

PASCHAL VIGIL

✠ PART 1 ✠



RETURN TO WITTENBERG
SAINT PAUL EVANGELICAL-LUTHERAN CHURCH
525 SUPERIOR AVE. TOMAH, WI 54660
OCTOBER THIRD, A+D 2020

✠ SERVICE OF LIGHT

BLESSING OF THE NEW FIRE

M The Lord be with you.

C **And with your spirit.**

M Let us pray

M O God, Who by Your Son, Who is the Cornerstone, has bestowed the fire of Your brightness on Your faithful people: Hallow † this new fire, that it may be a profitable symbol to us: and grant that during this Paschal festival we may be so inflamed with heavenly desires, that with pure minds we may come to the solemnity of perpetual light. Through the same Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

C ♪ **O God of God, O Light of Light,
O Prince of Peace and King of kings:
To Thee in heaven's glory bright
The song of praise forever rings.
To Him who shares the Father's throne,
The Lamb once slain but raised again,
Be all the glory He has won,
All thanks and praise! Amen, Amen. ♪**

M Let us pray

M O Lord God, almighty Father, never-failing Light, Who is the Creator of all lights, bless this light that is blessed † and created by You, Who has enlightened the whole world: that we may be inflamed with that light and enlightened by the fire of Your brightness: And as You gave light to Moses when he went out of Egypt, so enlighten our hearts and senses, that we may arrive at light and life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

C ♪ **O Light that once gave Israel sight,
Who brought them forth by Thy right hand
In form of fiery pillar bright,
And led them to the promised land:
Grant that this world Thy light may know;
Give brightness to all darkened eyes,
And, after leading them below,
Bring all Thine own to paradise. ♪**

The Sanctuary is dark; the candles are not lighted, and the bells are not rung. The Altar shall have no Paraments or adornments, except for the Paschal Candle set upon the Altar.

Before the Vigil, the people shall gather at a new fire lighted outside of the Sanctuary.

The Pastor shall gather with the people at the new fire. The liturgy makes use of the fire or light as a symbol of Christ, whose teaching enlightens the minds of the faithful and whose grace enkindles their hearts.

M Let us pray

M O holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God: As we light this fire in † Your Name, and in that of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our God and Lord, and of the Holy Spirit: Help us against the fiery darts of the enemy, and illumine us with Your heavenly grace; Who lives and reigns with the same Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

C Amen.

C ♪ Nations afar, in ignorance deep,
Isles of the sea, where darkness lay,
These hear His voice, they wake from sleep,
And throng with joy the upward way.
They cry with us, “Send forth Thy light,
O Lamb, once slain for sinful men;
Burst Satan’s bonds, O God of might;
Set all men free!” Amen, Amen.

♪ Illumine us, O Triune King.
With fire from heav’n our prayers attend.
To Thee alone our pray’rs we bring,
That all Thy light Thou mightest lend.
Thy name, O Lord, alone we plead:
Be with us in temptation’s hour;
Defend us in our time of need,
From all the tempter’s wiles and pow’r. ♪

BLESSING OF THE INCENSE

M Come, we beseech You, almighty God, and descend upon our hearts: by the outpouring of Your blessing, grant that we may understand what is symbolized by these grains of incense; that they represent the five sacred wounds in the hands, feet, and side of our Blessed Savior. O invisible Regenerator: Lighten the darkness of this night with the brightness of Your truth, granting us to know that full atonement has been made by the brightness of Your sacrifice, and that, wherever the mystery of this sanctification is brought, the expulsion of the devil, wickedness, and deceit may be effected by the power of Your majesty; Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

The fiery darts of Satan are no match for the all-consuming Fire of the living God. Just as the Israelites were defended from Pharaoh by the Pillar of Fire, which is represented in our Service by the “pillar” of the Paschal Candle, so we are defended from Satan by the Light from Light, God’s Son.

The five grains of incense will be put into the Paschal Candle, which ultimately represents Christ Himself, as representations of the wounds borne by our Savior during His Passion.

This hymn beautifully weaves together the themes of yesterday's Good Friday Service, with its focus on the Passover "Lamb for sinners slain," who now reigns on the Throne of God and is adored by the Heavenly Host—Whose rule topples the tyranny of Satan and every evil by the glory of His Resurrection.

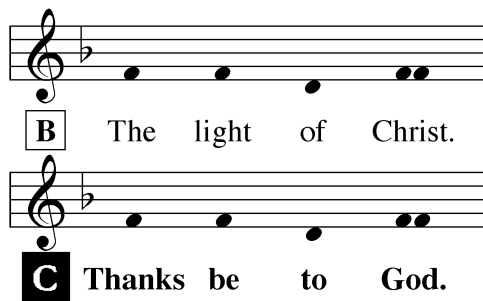
C ♪ That life of truth, those deeds of love,
 That death so steeped in hate and scorn
 These all are past, and now above
 He reigns, our King first crowned with thorn.
 Thy wounds, O Christ, have made us free;
 Expel from us all error's way
 All holiness we draw from Thee;
 Enlighten darkness into day.

C ♪ Then raise to Christ a mighty song,
 And shout His Name, His glories tell!
 Sing, Heavenly Host, your praise prolong,
 And all on earth, your anthem swell!
 All hail, O Lamb for sinners slain!
 Forever let the song ascend!
 All hail, O Lamb enthroned to reign!
 All hail, all hail! Amen, Amen. ♪

PROCESSION OF THE NEW FIRE

A three-fold candlestick, representing the Holy Trinity, is lit and processed into the Sanctuary.

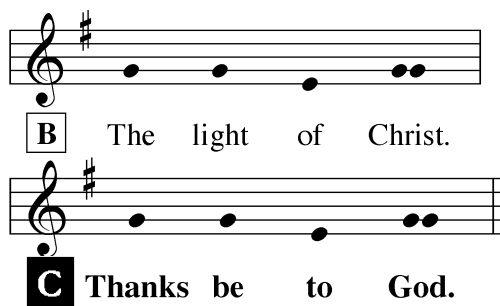
At the beginning of the Procession:



B The light of Christ.

C Thanks be to God.

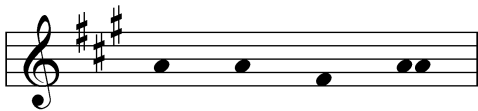
When the candle-bearer is halfway to the Paschal Candle:



B The light of Christ.

C Thanks be to God.

When the candle-bearer is at the Altar, in front of the Paschal Candle:



B The light of Christ.



C Thanks be to God.

THE EXULTET

Standing with the candle-bearer at the Altar, the Pastor faces the people and says:

M Exult, Heavenly Hosts and Choirs of Angels; exult, Divine Mysteries of God; let the trumpets of Salvation sound the victory of our mighty King. Be glad, O earth, made radiant by such splendor; and, enlightened with the brightness of the eternal King, let all corners of the whole world know that its darkness has been scattered. Rejoice, Holy Mother Church, adorned with the brightness of so great a Light: let this holy building shake with joy, filled with the mighty voices of the peoples. Therefore, dearest friends, standing in the awesome glory of this holy Light, invoke with me, I ask you, the mercy of God almighty.



M The_ Lord be_ with you.



C And_ with your_ spir - it.

Ruth 2:4; II Timothy 4:22



M Lift_ up_ your_ hearts._



C We lift them up un - to the Lord.

Lamentations 3:41



M Let us give thanks un-to the Lord our_ God.



C It is good and right so to do.

Psalm 136

The chant of the Exultet is among the Church's most ancient melodies and texts. Sts. Augustine and Jerome both wrote about the Exsultet; the former even preached a homily on the Paschal Candle, meaning these rites predate the fourth century A+D. At the beginning of the Exultet, the Minister bids us and all creation to blend our voices in resplendent joy in praise of the eternal Light of God, which even the darkness of death could not overcome.

The Exultet reminds us that the power of the Resurrection, to which we are united in Holy Baptism, saves us from corruption and frees us to live new lives separated from the darkness of sin, just as the children of Israel were freed through the waters of the Red Sea over 3,000 years ago.

M It is truly good and right with ardent love of mind and heart and with devoted service of our voice, to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord, His Son, His Only-Begotten. Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the Eternal Father, and mercifully shedding His own Blood, canceled the debt incurred by original sin. This, then, is the Paschal Festival, in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb, Whose Blood anoints the doorposts of believers. This is the night, when once You led our forebears, Israel's children, from slavery in Egypt and made them pass with dry foot through the Red Sea. This is the night that with a Pillar of Fire banished the darkness of sin. This is the night that even now, throughout the world, sets Christian believers apart from worldly vices and from the gloom of sin, leading them to grace and joining them to His Holy Ones. This is the night, when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victoriously from the grave. Our birth would have been no gain, had we not been redeemed. O wondrous condescension of Your mercy toward us! O love, O charity beyond all telling, to redeem a slave You gave away Your Son! O truly needful sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer! O truly blessed night, worthy alone to know the time and hour when Christ rose from the underworld! This is the night of which it is written: The night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me, and full of gladness. The sanctifying power of this night dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.

Here the pastor puts the grains of incense in the Paschal Candle, in the form of a cross, as follows:

1
5 2 4
3

Concerning this reference to bees, St. Augustine said in his homily for the Paschal Vigil: "The honeycomb is made up of three parts: wax, honey, and incubating eggs. And the Church is made up of Scripture, intellect, and bearing. As the wax encases the honey, so the Scriptures are the custodian of the intellect. Just as the nest of eggs is contained in the wax, so the affections of the bearer are grounded in Sacred Scripture."

M On this, Your night of grace, O Holy Father, accept this candle, a symbol of our praise, the work of bees and of your servants' hands, which glowing fire ignites for God's honor.

Here the Pastor lights the Paschal Candle with the three-fold candlestick

M Which fire, into many flames divided, is never dimmed by sharing of its light, for it is fed by melting wax, drawn out by mother bees to build a torch so precious.


Here some lights in the Sanctuary may be lighted; however, the Altar candles, aside from the Paschal Candle, remain unlighted.



M O truly blessed night, which spoiled the Egyptians and enriched the Hebrews! When things of heaven are wed to those of earth, and Divine to the human. Therefore, O Lord, we pray You that this candle, hallowed to the honor of Your Name, may persevere undimmed, to overcome the darkness of this night. Receive it as a pleasing fragrance, and let it mingle with the lights of heaven. May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star: the one Morning Star Who never sets, Christ Your Son, Who, coming back from death's domain, has shed His peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns forever and ever.

Just as the Egyptians were "spoiled" (meaning plundered), allowing the Israelites to escape with their riches, so Christ has "spoiled the spoiler of his prey" by liberating man, bestowing upon us the riches of eternal life.



C A - men.

C  How lovely shines the Morning Star!
The nations see and hail afar
The light in Judah shining.
Thou David's Son of Jacob's race,
My Bridegroom and my King of Grace,
For Thee my heart is pining.
Lowly,
Holy,
Great and glorious,
Thou victorious
Prince of graces,
Filling all the heav'nly places.

 A pledge of peace from God I see
When Thy pure eyes are turned to me
To show me Thy good pleasure.
Jesus, Thy Spirit and Thy Word,
Thy Body and Thy Blood afford
My soul its dearest treasure.
Keep me
Kindly
In Thy favor,
O my Savior!
Thou wilt cheer me;
Thy Word calls me to draw near Thee 

Philip Nikolai composed the text of this hymn, known as the "Queen of Chorales," to visually represent a Communion Chalice. The second stanza sung here highlights the connection to the Lord's Supper. The stanza also prepares our hearts and minds for a proper meditation on the Word in the remainder of the Service.

✠ THE SERVICE OF READINGS

FIRST PROPHECY

Genesis 1-2:2 (*excerpts*)

M In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. [. . .]

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

And God said, “See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food”; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

M Let us pray. — O God, Who wonderfully created man and more wonderfully redeemed him: Grant us, we beseech You, to persevere with a sound mind against the delights of sin, so that we may attain the joys of eternity. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

SECOND PROPHECY

Genesis 5-8 (*excerpts*)

M Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

The ancient Church used the twelve prophecies in this “Service of Readings” to address the catechumens who would be baptized later in the Vigil. These prophecies outlined the principal points of Christian Doctrine, interspersed with prayers and tracts which sum up or explain the teaching contained in the Lessons just read. In some way, each of the Lessons can be viewed as pertaining to Holy Baptism.

The first prophecy recounts the creation of the world, where the “Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The man created after the image of God and His likeness had dominion over all living creatures. In Holy Baptism, the Spirit of God recreates Man in the Image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.[. . .]

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man.

Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.[. . .]

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”

M Let us pray. — O God, the unchangeable Power and eternal Light: Look with favor on the wondrous mystery of Your whole Church, and by Your everlasting decree show that the work of man’s salvation is effected by You; let the whole world see that what was cast down is raised up, what was old is renewed, and all things are returning to perfection, through Him from Whom they received their first being, our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C Amen.

The ark is the prefigure of the true Church, which is the Ark of Salvation. The Flood itself symbolizes Baptism, as St. Peter says in his First Epistle (3:21), which “now saves you.”

The offering of Abraham is a figure of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The faith of Abraham points to how man is justified: not by works of the law, but by faith in the promises of God. The covenant made to Abraham, that all nations would be blessed through his Seed, is fulfilled in Christ, who makes sons of Abraham through the adoption of Holy Baptism.

THIRD PROPHECY

Genesis 22 (*excerpts*)

M Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Then He said, “Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” [. . .]

Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.”

And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.”

Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

M Let us pray. — O God, most high Father of all the faithful, Who multiplies the children of Your promise throughout the world by the grace of Your adoption: As in this Paschal Mystery You make Your servant Abraham the father of many nations according to Your oath, grant grace to Your people so they may carry out the vocations You have ordained for them. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

FOURTH PROPHECY

Exodus 14:24-15:1a

M Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.” And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters *were* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.


So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.



Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying:

A Canticle of Moses

Exodus 15:1b-3

Tune: Rex Gloriae

C  **Let us sing unto the Lord God;**
He has triumphed gloriously:
Pharaoh’s fearsome horse and rider
He has thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength, Him only;
The Lord is my strength and song.
He alone is my salvation,
Let my tongue His praise prolong.

 **He is God, my God, and for Him**
I a dwelling will prepare.
He is God, God of my fathers;
I will exalt Him fore’er.
The Lord is of wars Destroyer;
The LORD is His holy Name.
Yesterday, today, unchanging;
Evermore He is the same. 

M Let us pray. — O God, Whose ancient miracles we see shining also in our age; Who provided one people liberation from the persecution of the Egyptians by the power of Your right hand, and the Gentiles salvation through the water of regeneration: Grant that all the nations of the world may become the children of Abraham, and partake of the dignity of the people of Israel. Through Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

As Moses freed the Israelites from the captivity of Egypt, so Christ by Baptism redeems His people from the yoke of Satan.

*“Come to the waters,”
the prophet says. The
Lord makes an
“everlasting covenant”
with us in the waters of
Holy Baptism,
adopting us into His
family. The Word
spoken therein is
powerful and effective.
God’s Word will not
return to Him empty.*

FIFTH PROPHECY

Isaiah 54:17-55:11

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment
You shall condemn.
This *is* the heritage of the servants of the Lord,
And their righteousness *is* from Me,”
Says the Lord.
“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.
Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people,
A leader and commander for the people.
Surely you shall call a nation you do not know,
And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you,
Because of the Lord your God,
And the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”
Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
“For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the Lord.
“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,

That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.”

M Let us pray. — Almighty and everlasting God: The many fathers of the faith gave honor to Your name; enlarge the children of the promise through the sacred rite of adoption, for what the former saints did not hesitate to believe, Your Church now knows to the full extent. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

SIXTH PROPHECY

Liturgical Text

M Hear the commandments of life, O Israel; give ear and learn wisdom! Why is it, O Israel, why is it that you are in the land of your enemies, that you are growing old in a foreign country, that you are defiled with the dead, that you are counted among those in Hades? You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom. If you had walked in the way of God, you would be dwelling in peace forever. Learn where there is wisdom, where there is strength, where there is understanding, that you may at the same time discern where there is length of days and life, where there is light for the eyes and peace. [. . .]

[Wisdom] has not been heard of in the land of Canaan, neither has it been seen in Teman: [. . .] Neither have they remembered her paths. O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession! It is great, and has no end: It is high and immense. There were the giants, those renowned men that were from the beginning, of great stature, expert in war. The Lord choose not them, neither did they find the way of knowledge: therefore they perished, *because they had not wisdom*. [. . .]

Who has gone up into heaven and taken her and brought her down from the clouds? Who has gone over the sea and found her and will buy her for pure gold? There is none that knows the way to her or is concerned about her paths. But He Who knows all things knows her, He found her by His understanding. He who prepared the earth for all time and filled it with four-footed creatures; He who sends forth the light, and it goes, called it, and it obeyed Him in fear; the stars shone in their watches and were glad; He called them, and they said, “Here we are!” They shone with gladness for Him who made them. This is our God; no other can be compared to Him! He found the whole way to knowledge and gave it to Jacob His servant and to Israel whom He loved. Afterward He appeared upon earth and dwelt among man.

M Let us pray. — O God, Who is always calling the multitude of the Gentiles to Your Church: Mercifully grant that we who are washed in the water of Baptism might be defended by Your continuous protection. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Wisdom was hidden from the Gentiles after the Fall due to the corrupting influence of Satan. God’s coming in the flesh and subsequent death on the Cross removed Satan from his pretender-throne. Christ frees us from Satan’s grasp in the waters of Baptism, enabling us to learn and grow in wisdom.

SEVENTH PROPHECY

Ezekiel 37:1-14

M The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.”

Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord.” ’ ”

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them.

Also He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord God: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ’ ” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore prophecy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the Lord.’ ”

M Let us pray. — O God, Who instructed in the pages of both Testaments the celebration of the Paschal Sacrament: Give us Your mercy to understand that, from the perception of these present gifts, we have a sure expectation of things to come. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

EIGHTH PROPHECY

Isaiah 4:2-6

M In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious;
And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing
For those of Israel who have escaped.

The powerful Word of God can bring back to life both the physically and spiritually dead. Through the power of the Word joined to the waters of Holy Baptism, those who are by nature dead in sin are made alive in Christ.


And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.



The Lord purges the filth of His peoples' sin in the waters of the Holy Bath.

A Canticle of Isaiah

Isaiah 5:1-2, 7a

Tune: O DU LIEBE MEINER LIEBE

C  My Beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill;
He protected it and gathered
The stones with which it was filled.
In it choicest vines He planted,
Cultivating them with care.
Lovingly He pruned and fed them,
Guarding them from harmful tares.

 In my Well-Beloved's vineyard
He built up a tower tall,
And He made a winepress in it,
planning for a fruitful haul.
For our God, the Lord of Angels,
Is the One of Whom I tell;
And the vineyard of His glory
Is the House of Israel. 

M Let us pray. — O God, Who reveals to all the children of Your Church, by the voice of the holy prophets, that in every place of Your dominion You are the Sower of good seed and Cultivator of the choicest branches: Grant, we beseech You, to Your people, whom You call by the name of Vineyard and Harvest, that they may root out all thorns and thistles and bear good fruit in abundance. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

NINTH PROPHECY

Exodus 12 (*excerpts*)

M “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. [. . .] Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly

The powerful Blood of Christ, our true Paschal Lamb, washes away our every sin. Martin Luther says in the Catechetical Hymn on Holy Baptism: "The eye alone plain water sees, and men the water pouring; faith, in the Spirit, yet believes, Christ's powerful Blood adoring. It sees therein a crimson flood, dyed with the Blood of Jesus, which from the sins inherited from fallen Adam frees us, and from our own wrongdoings."

Whenever a Christian repents and turns to God in faith, he renews his Baptism. St. John Chrysostom says: "And like as by water and the Spirit, so by tears and confession are we cleansed the second time."

of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night [. . .] You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the Lord's Passover."

M Let us pray. — Almighty and everlasting God, Who is wonderful in the dispensation of all Your works: Your redeemed people understand that Your most excellent work was not at the beginning when the world was made; but rather at the end of the age, when Christ our Passover was sacrificed, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

C Amen.

TENTH PROPHECY

Jonah 3:1-10

M Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

M Let us pray. — O God, Who has united together the diversity of the nations in the confession of Your Name: Grant us both to will and do what You command. As You have called Your people to eternity, may we be one in mind, faith, and holiness of action. Through Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

ELEVENTH PROPHECY

Deuteronomy 31:22-30

M Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”

So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. *If* today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death? Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.”

Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:



M “Give ear, O heavens, and / I will speak;*
And hear, O earth, the words / of my mouth.

C **Let my teaching drop / as the rain,***
My speech distills / as the dew,

M As raindrops on the / tender herb,*
And as showers / on the grass.

C **For I proclaim the name / of the Lord:***
Ascribe greatness / to our God.

M He is the Rock, His work is / perfect;*
For all His ways are / justice,

C **A God of truth and without in- / justice;***
Righteous and up- / right is He.

M Let us pray. — O God, Who exalts the humble and strengthens the upright: Who also was pleased through Your holy servant Moses to instruct Your people in the chanting of sacred song: We beseech You to manifest Your power among all those whom You have justified; that being delivered from the fear of Your wrath, they may rejoice in the full remission of all their sins; and being warned to flee from the vengeance of Your judgment, they may be saved eternally. Through Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

The promises made to us in Holy Baptism are made ever new through a continual connection to God's Word. His teachings “drop as the rain;” His speech “distills as the dew.”

TWELFTH PROPHECY

Daniel 3 (*excerpts*)

The life of the child of God is not easy. Like the three young men in the fiery furnace, the Baptized Christian will be constantly assaulted by the Nebuchadnezzars of the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh. But a firm reliance in the promises of the Word will reap an eternal reward. Even if our bodies are destroyed by flames in this life, our souls will be spared from eternal flames in life everlasting.

M Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold. [. . .] The satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone [. . .] whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “*Is it* true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? [. . .] If you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and* cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. [. . .]

Because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

M Let us pray. — O almighty and everlasting God, the only Hope of the world, Who proclaimed that these are Your prophets and through them declared the mysteries of the present times: Mercifully increase the faith of Your people, because none of the faithful, except by Your inspiration, are able to proceed in the growth of any spiritual virtue. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C Amen.

SERMON

BENEDICTE, OMNIA OPERA DOMINO

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Daniel 3:56-88

The Canticle of the Three Young Men

STAND

♪ 1. You Angel Hosts and heav'nly pow'rs,
You sun and moon that mark the hours:
All creation, join to bless Him!
You summer heat and wint'ry blast,
You cloudy skies and oceans vast:
All creation, join to bless Him!
Benedicte! Benedicte! Benedicte!

♪ 2. You rolling hills and tow'ring peaks,
You rivers wide and rippling creeks:
All creation, join to bless Him!
You lofty branch and sunken root,
You fields of grain and sweetest fruit:
All creation, join to bless Him!
Benedicte! Benedicte! Benedicte!

♪ 3. You swimming creatures of the deep,
You cattle, oxen, bleating sheep:
All creation, join to bless Him!
You soaring birds upon the air,
You regal lion in your lair:
All creation, join to bless Him!
Benedicte! Benedicte! Benedicte!

♪ 4. You mortal people, made from earth,
You sons of God now by rebirth:
All creation, join to bless Him!
You humble servants of the King
His praises now and ever sing!
All creation join to bless, Him!
Benedicte! Benedicte! Benedicte! ♪

*The Son of God,
with all His Angel
Host, stands armed
with us against
the fiery darts of
the evil foe.*

*Benedicte, Omnia
Opera is a liturgical
song ascribed to the
three young men after
escaping the fiery
furnace. It forms an
apt coda to the 12th
prophecy, and a fitting
way to conclude
Part 1 of the Vigil.*

SIT.

SILENT PRAYER

ABOUT TODAY'S SERVICE

The Paschal Vigil is one of the Church's most ancient liturgies. "Paschal" refers to Passover, which is the name most non-English languages use to refer to "Easter." There was a pious tradition in the ancient Church that the Lord would return on the day He rose from the dead. Thus, beginning at sundown on Holy Saturday, the faithful would gather for an all-night Vigil, ensuring that the Lord would not find them slumbering. The Service culminated in the celebration of the Sacrament at midnight, heralding in the Day of Resurrection in the presence of the Risen Christ.

The Paschal Vigil, with its close connection to Passover and the Hebrew believers, immerses its participants in a continuity of events stretching back thousands of years. The four main sections of the Vigil help to explain this connection in greater depth.

The Paschal Candle, which is the central symbol of the opening "Service of Light," is meant to represent the Pillar of Fire with which the Angel of the Lord, the pre-Incarnate Word, guided the Israelites out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea on dry ground. The Exultet, an ancient chant dating from the first centuries of the Church, connects us to this narrative, comparing our liberation from sin and Satan to the Hebrews' liberation from Pharaoh. Just as the Hebrews were saved through the waters of the Red Sea, so we are saved through the waters of Baptism.

The "Service of Readings" that follows traces salvation history from the beginning of time throughout the Old Testament, extrapolating upon this Baptismal connection. These prophecies mystically prefigure the Sacrament of Baptism, ranging from the "Spirit of God hovering over the waters" at creation, to the type of the Flood, which "signifies Baptism that now saves us," as St. Peter says, to even the dry bones brought back to life in Ezekiel's vision, just as the waters of Baptism regenerate our dead spirits.

The Paschal Vigil was also used by the ancient Church as a Baptismal Service, wherein catechumens were baptized and admitted into the congregation. Part 2 of the Paschal Vigil will begin with the "Service of Baptism," which hearkens to this ancient rite. The Paschal Candle, Symbolizing the Eternal Word, is plunged into the Baptismal Font in a reenactment of the Baptism of Christ, wherein the Holy Trinity consecrated the waters of our Baptism, decisively freeing us from Satan's dominion.

The Great Litany, an ancient prayer of the Church, followed this rite as the catechumens were baptized. Then the formal Paschal Liturgy, the first celebration of the Resurrection, was observed at midnight with the singing of the Christmas Angels' great hymn of praise, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, which had been omitted from the Liturgy since the beginning of Lent. This was met with a full bell peal, the lighting of the candles, the return of the "*Alleluia*," and immense joy that culminated in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

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