

THE EASTER VIGIL

WHAT IS IT?



Will you go to the Easter Vigil in your parish Church this year?

The Easter Vigil has been called the most important Liturgy and Mass of the entire year. It is the climax of the Church's liturgical year. It is even more significant than Christmas! Yes, Christmas is Jesus' birthday, when He came into the world to save us. It is worthy of a great birthday celebration. However, Easter celebrates how Jesus redeemed us by His death and Resurrection. The Easter Vigil both recounts the story of our salvation and celebrates Jesus' resurrection. It is the first

occasion on which the word *Halleluia* is heard since Ash Wednesday.

The Vigil takes place after sunset on Holy Saturday, to emphasise the Church's vigil, or waiting, for the Resurrection of Jesus. The church is always dark which, combined with the growing darkness outside, reminds us of the darkness of the tomb from which Jesus rose.

The Easter Vigil can last much longer than a regular Mass, so if you decide to go, be prepared to be in Church for a longer period of time than usual. However, the entire event is filled with more ceremony and pageantry than one normally experiences. If you are a person who enjoys this type of event, then the Easter Vigil could be beneficial to you.

Liturgy of Light – the Paschal Candle



Paschal Candle (istock)

A fire, called the New Fire or Paschal Fire, is lit outside of the Church. (Paschal is the Latin word for Easter). From this fire is lit the Paschal candle, a large ornate candle that represents the risen Christ. After the priest inserts special symbols into the body of the candle, he leads a procession into the Church up to the altar. From the Paschal Candle, the congregation lights smaller candles, and follows the procession into the body of the Church.

The spreading of the fire represents the spread of the teachings of Christ through the work of the people. The priest chants 3 times *Light of Christ*, to which the people respond *Thanks be to God*. The Paschal candle is put in a prominent location and remains visible throughout the year.

The Exsultet



Ant.
1 D.
E -Xsúl-tet ómni- um * tur- ba fi- dé-li- um pro gló-
ri- a almi Patris Bene- dí-cti, et e-ó-rum ómni-um qui
e-jus vesti-gi- a sunt se- cú-ti: læ- tén-tur præ-ci-pu- e
ca-tér-væ mo-nachó-rum, ce-lebrán-tes e-ó-rum fe- sta in
terris, de quo-rum so-ci- e-tá- te sancti congáu-dent in cæ-
lis. E u o u a e.

The Exsultet it is an ancient hymn of praise for God's saving work in human history, culminating in the Resurrection of Christ. Ideally, it is chanted by a deacon. If no deacon is present, it can be chanted by the priest or a cantor. If necessary, it can be recited.

Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word consists of readings of Salvation history. There are 7 Old Testament readings which contain the familiar stories of Abraham and Isaac and Moses, the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. In modern times, Churches have had the option of using only 3 readings, as long as the Exodus story is included. After the Old Testament readings, the Gloria is triumphantly sung, with bells ringing as they did on Holy Thursday and all the lights in the Church turned on. There follows a New Testament reading from St Paul and of course the Gospel account of the Resurrection.



Testify God



Baptismal Waters

The waters to be used in Baptism throughout the year are blessed and then sprinkled on the people in the Church. These waters symbolise New Life, which all Christians receive through Baptism.



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Rites of Initiation

The Easter Vigil in some parishes is a time to welcome new Catholics into the Church. Often, this involves adults, called catechumens, who have undergone the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) to learn about the Catholic Faith. These candidates may receive up to three of the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. Some parishes have infant Baptism as well.



Catechumens receiving Sacraments
(Instagram)

Eucharist

After the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, Mass continues as always. There would be a homily, followed by the Offertory and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. New Catholics receive First Holy Communion with the rest of the congregation. The dismissal and farewell from the priest will be joyous and filled with alleluias!



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