

E A S T E R   S U N D A Y

# PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE



## Easter Exultet

“Exultet” is the opening word in Latin of The Easter Proclamation, an ancient hymn sung by the deacon over the Easter candle which is lit at the start of the Easter Vigil on

Holy Saturday evening which celebrates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Exultet (aka Exsultet) appears to have been in use in the Roman Catholic Easter liturgy from between the 5th and 7th centuries.

### Section 1

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

Exult, all creation around God’s throne!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Sound the trumpet of salvation! Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,  
radiant in the brightness of your King!

Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!

Darkness vanishes for ever!

Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!

The risen Savior shines upon you!

Let this place resound with joy,

echoing the mighty song of all God’s people!

My dearest friends,

standing with me in this holy light,

join me in asking God for mercy,

that he may give his unworthy minister  
grace to sing his Easter praises.

## Section 2

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise. It is truly right  
that with full hearts and minds and voices  
we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father,  
and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Christ has ransomed us with his blood,  
and paid for us the price of Adam's sin  
to our eternal Father!

This is our passover feast,  
when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,  
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

This is the night  
when first you saved our fathers:  
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery  
and led them dry-shod through the sea.

This is the night when the pillar of fire  
destroyed the darkness of sin!

This is the night  
when Christians everywhere,  
washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement,  
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

This is the night  
when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death  
and rose triumphant from the grave.

What good would life have been to us,  
had Christ not come as our Redeemer?

Father, how wonderful your care for us!  
How boundless your merciful love!  
To ransom a slave  
you gave away your Son.

### Section 3

O happy fault,  
O necessary sin of Adam,  
which gained for us so great a Redeemer! Most blessed of all nights,  
chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!

Of this night scripture says:  
“The night will be as clear as day:  
it will become my light, my joy.”

The power of this holy night dispels all evil,  
washes guilt away, restores lost innocence,  
brings mourners joy;  
it casts out hatred, brings us peace,  
and humbles earthly pride.

Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth  
and man is reconciled with God!

Therefore, heavenly Father,  
in the joy of this night,  
receive our evening sacrifice of praise,  
your Church’s solemn offering.

Accept this Easter candle,  
a flame divided but undimmed,  
a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.

For it is fed by the melting wax,  
which the mother bee brought forth  
to make this precious candle.

## Section 4

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven  
and continue bravely burning  
to dispel the darkness of this night!

May the Morning Star which never sets  
find this flame still burning:  
Christ, that Morning Star,  
who came back from the dead,  
and shed his peaceful light on all mankind,  
your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.



## **Easter Vigil: The most beautiful liturgy of the year, explained in a brief guide** (by Philip Kosloski of Aleteia)

The entire liturgical year culminates in the Easter Vigil, an ancient liturgy celebrated on the night before Easter Sunday. It was initially an all-night vigil that started in the middle of the night and didn't end until the first rays of dawn when the celebration of Mass began.

For early Christians, it was a way to welcome the rising of the Son of God, who dispels the darkness of night.

It was eventually shortened and pushed back earlier in the evening, but many of the same rituals are performed with great solemnity. The Easter Vigil is a beautiful experience, one that immerses a person into the very heart of the Paschal Mystery.

Below is a brief guide to the Easter Vigil, along with reflections by Pope Benedict XVI, who frequently meditated on the liturgy during his Easter Vigil homilies.

### **First Part: The Liturgy of Light (Lucernarium)**

The church is shrouded in darkness as a fire is lighted outside the church and the Easter candle is lit from it. The candle represents Jesus Christ, the light of the world. The deacon or priest processes into the dark church and stops three times, proclaiming "Christ, our Light!" By the time he reaches the sanctuary the entire church is blazing with candles that were lit from the Easter candle.

First there is the fire that becomes light. As the procession makes its way through the church, shrouded in the darkness of the night, the light of the Paschal Candle becomes a wave of lights, and it speaks to us of Christ as the true morning star that never sets – the Risen Lord in whom light has conquered darkness.

### **The Easter Proclamation**

When the Easter candle arrives in the sanctuary, the deacon chants the “Easter Proclamation” (also called the Exsultet, from its first word in Latin, “Rejoice”), an ancient hymn that speaks of the many mysteries of this night.

The great hymn of the Exsultet, which the deacon sings at the beginning of the Easter liturgy, points us quite gently towards a further aspect. It reminds us that this object, the candle, has its origin in the work of bees. So the whole of creation plays its part. In the candle, creation becomes a bearer of light. But in the mind of the Fathers, the candle also in some sense contains a silent reference to the Church. The cooperation of the living community of believers in the Church in some way resembles the activity of bees. It builds up the community of light. So the candle serves as a summons to us to become involved in the community of the Church, whose *raison d'être* is to let the light of Christ shine upon the world.

### **Second Part: The Liturgy of the Word**

A number of readings are read, still in the darkness of the church. From Genesis through the New Testament, God’s marvelous plan is unfolded. The readings are often interspersed with chanted passages or hymns.

The Church wishes to offer us a panoramic view of whole trajectory of salvation history, starting with creation, passing through the election and the liberation of Israel to the testimony of the prophets by which this entire history is directed ever more clearly towards Jesus Christ. In the liturgical tradition all these readings were called prophecies. Even when they are not directly foretelling future events, they have a prophetic character, they show us the inner foundation and orientation of history. They cause creation and history to become transparent to what is essential. In this way they take us by the hand and lead us towards Christ, they show us the true Light.

### **Third Part: The Baptismal Liturgy**

Depending on the circumstances of each parish, a baptismal liturgy is performed. This

is the liturgy at which all those who have been preparing to join the Church, or to complete their sacraments as older children or adults, are initiated into the Christian community. The celebration of Baptism (for those who were not Christian) or a Profession of Faith (for those Christians already baptized in a Protestant tradition who are becoming Catholic) and Confirmation takes place at this time. Later on in the Mass, the neophytes, as they are now called, will receive their First Communion.

Regardless of whether someone will be baptized or not, the water of the baptismal font is blessed in order to prepare for those who will be washed clean from their sins and reborn in the death of Christ. Those present renew their baptismal vows.

Baptism is more than a bath, a purification. It is more than becoming part of a community. It is a new birth. A new beginning in life. The passage of the Letter to the Romans which we have just read says, in words filled with mystery, that in Baptism we have been “grafted” onto Christ by likeness to his death. In Baptism we give ourselves over to Christ – he takes us unto himself, so that we no longer live for ourselves, but through him, with him and in him; so that we live with him and thus for others.

#### **Fourth Part: The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The liturgy draws to its culmination and conclusion with the celebration of the holy Eucharist, in which the newly baptized will partake for the first time.

As the day of the liturgical assembly, it is the day for encounter with God through Jesus Christ who as the Risen Lord encountered his followers on the first day, Sunday, after they had found the tomb empty. The structure of the week is overturned. No longer does it point towards the seventh day, as the time to participate in God’s rest. It sets out from the first day as the day of encounter with the Risen Lord. This encounter happens afresh at every celebration of the Eucharist, when the Lord enters anew into the midst of his disciples and gives himself to them, allows himself, so to speak, to be touched by them, sits down at table with them.

