

Light and Darkness in the Easter Vigil

Each year parishes and parishioners ask about the timing of the Easter Vigil. The following newsletter inserts were created to help us all to reflect a little more deeply on the symbolism of light and dark that is so central to this liturgy. Lets not be afraid to learn together - to admit that we do not yet have all the answers, that God has more to teach us! ☺



The following are intended to be newsletter inserts for the six weeks of Lent. Feel free to adapt them to suit your parish needs – just remember to check the dates/times in the final weeks notes (the time of sunset on Easter Saturday night!)

Week One's newsletter insert: *Light and darkness in life*

I once heard **light** defined as, “that agent of force in nature, by which objects are made luminous or visible. In food, not oppressive. In company, not demanding. Light is. In its presence, life is.” If this is true, then **darkness** might be said to be the absence of light, a state of ignorance, of distress or trouble.

“Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living.” Helen Keller

Who brings light to my life? This Lent, where would I like God to shine a light in my life?

Week Two's newsletter insert: *Light and darkness in scripture*

Without the guiding Word of God, the world stumbles in darkness. The life and message of Jesus casts light on the meaning and direction of our lives. With Jesus as our Light we are able to see. We are enabled to have a vision of what life, human life, is about, how it should be lived, what is its ultimate goal. It clarifies what our relations need to be with ourselves, with others, with our natural environment and with God. It is no wonder that the healing of blindness is so central to the work of Jesus.

Based on resources from www.sacredspace.ie commentary on John 1:1-18

*Where in my life am I blind, - unwilling or unable to see clearly?
What do the words of Jesus – the light of the world – have to say to my blindness?*

Week Three's newsletter insert: *Light and darkness on our Lenten journey*

Lent comes at a time of the year when the long dark nights begin to wane in favour of longer daylight. It is often a welcome relief to turn our faces to the sunshine. By the March equinox day and night time are equal.

As we journey towards Easter, the light gradually overcomes the darkness. What a powerful symbol of the season of Lent! This is an opportunity to move from darkness to light in all areas of our lives. Unlike the seasons however, we are not at the mercy of gravity, of the sun or, of nature. We are graced by Gods love, and blessed by Jesus who is the light of the world. We can step forward into the Light that guides our path this season.

Week Four's newsletter insert: *Light and darkness at Easter*

Speaking at the Easter Vigil 2009, Pope Benedict reminded us, that when Jesus "had foretold his passion and his resurrection after three days. Peter had protested against this prediction of death. But now, they were wondering what could be meant by the word "resurrection". Could it be that we find ourselves in a similar situation?

Christmas, the birth of the divine Infant, we can somehow immediately comprehend. We can love the child, we can imagine that night in Bethlehem, ...

But what is resurrection? It does not form part of our experience, and so the message often remains to some degree beyond our understanding ... The Church tries to help us understand it, by expressing this mysterious event in the language of symbols in which we can somehow contemplate this astonishing event. During the Easter Vigil, the Church points out the significance of this day principally through three symbols: light, water, and the new song – the Alleluia."

*What symbol might I use in my life to describe hope, love, or beginning again? ... Light?
What does resurrection mean to me this year? Where is God bringing death to life?
How can symbols help me to recognise that God is here?*

Week Five's newsletter insert: *Light and darkness at the Easter Vigil*

Darkness: The Easter Vigil begins with darkness. The darkness is actually the first part of the liturgy! It represents all darkness, and all the meanings of darkness: the darkness of our world, and the darkness in my heart. **If I come to the vigil and restlessly and impatiently fidget in the dark "until something happens," I miss the power of what is already happening.** So, we prepare for the Easter Vigil by readying ourselves to experience the darkness. It is uncomfortable and confusing, humbling and nervous. Then a light is struck. It breaks into the darkness like nothing else can.

"Make this new fire holy, and inflame us with new hope."

"May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds"

The Light of Christ: The candle lit from the new Pascal fire is then brought into the community in procession, and we receive its light, and the power of that light grows. When the candle is brought front and centre, we hear the Easter Proclamation, or Exultet.

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!

Based on resources from www.onlineministries.creighton.edu

Week Six's newsletter insert: *Time, darkness, and light at the Easter Vigil*

PLEASE FILL IN ##TIMES## BELOW – DETAILS FROM DIOCESAN OFFICE (061 315876)

“During the Easter Vigil, the Church points out the significance of this day principally through three symbols: light, water, and the new song – the Alleluia.”

(Pope Benedict, Easter Vigil 2009)

In order that we engage fully with all God is offering on this holy of holy nights, every diocese issues a time before which the Easter Vigil may not begin. In the diocese, this year, that time is #####

Why do we celebrate the Easter Vigil after dark ... why is the darkness a big deal!?!?

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday. This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. The Easter Vigil does not correspond to the usual Saturday evening anticipated Mass, and its character is unique in the cycle of the liturgical year. It ought to take place at night. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments observes that the kinds of objections raised to holding the Paschal Vigil at night are not raised when it comes to midnight Masses at Christmas or other gatherings of various kinds. To light a fire and candles and speak of “this holy night,” and “Christ the Morning Star,” while there is still light on the western horizon is literally anachronistic!

The intention of the Missale Romanum is clear: the Easter Vigil is to take place in darkness. Thus the approved translation of ‘post initium noctis’ is, “after nightfall;” that is, after the time in the evening when daylight is last visible. (For more details see Paschale Solemnitatis: Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts, Feb 1988., or the Roman Missal.)

Time of vigil

Sunset on Saturday, April 3rd 2010 is estimated at 20:04

Sunrise on Sunday, April 4th 2010 estimated at 6:52 am

Easter Vigil may begin after ##### pm.

