

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EASTER VIGIL

16th April, 2022,

INTRODUCTION

VIGIL means “to be awake, to be watchful”. Early Christians kept watch all night, with hymns prayers, and reading the Scriptures; longing for the dawn, as they waited for the coming of the Risen Christ.

The service has four parts:

- 1 The service of light and the **EASTER PROCLAMATION**
- 2 The Liturgy of the Word of God
- 3 Blessing of the Water; Baptism
- 4 The Eucharist.

1) The Easter Vigil service begins with lighting the fire, in darkness, outside the church. The fire is blessed and the Easter Candle is lit. Christ gives us light and life; He breaks through the darkness of sin and death.

The Paschal Candle which represents Jesus Christ is lit from the fire. There are markings on the candle. **Alpha and Omega** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christ is the beginning and end of all time. **Five grains** of incense, representing the five wounds, are put into the candle. The year **2022** is marked to show that Christ is alive today.

A procession starts with the invocation **Christ the Light**. Three times it stops as the light of Christ begins to spread to everyone and everywhere. We respond: **THANKS BE TO GOD**

2. The **PASCHAL CANDLE** is placed on a prominent stand and the **EASTER PROCLAMATION** is solemnly pronounced. It is a most ancient hymn addressed to the candle, that represents Christ, it is “a rejoicing because darkness vanishes; and shining splendour is radiant.” All hold lighted candles.

3. **LITURGY OF THE WORD:** There is a choice of readings from the **Old Testament**, referring to an overview of Salvation History.

4. Until now, the altar was not decorated with flowers. Now that the Old Testament has been replaced, we sing the **Gloria**, bring out the flowers, ring the bells, and introduce a festive tone. The celebration of the Resurrection has begun.

The Priest says the Opening Prayer.

The Reading from **St. Paul** reminds us that if we “believe that we die with Christ, we shall also rise with him to a new life.”

Then there is the reading of the **Gospel**. All three Synoptics mention the women going to the tomb, and finding the stone rolled away and Jesus not there. He is risen.

5. **Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Promises.** A large vessel filled with water is brought, and now blessed.

The congregation lights their candles; and prepare for the Renewal of their Baptismal Promises. This also takes the place of the Creed, and is followed by the **Prayer of the Faithful**.

6. From here on, **the Eucharist** continues as usual, right to the end.