



The icon on the cover of this booklet is entitled Christ's Descent into Hades (image from <https://www.orthodoxroad.com/christs-descent-into-hell-icon-explanation/>). In the Eastern Orthodox Church it is the primary icon of Easter. Reflect upon this icon as you read through the Easter vigil. Some of the key features are:

- * Christ's cape/robe is flowing upward, this symbolizes his radical descent into Hades to save those who have died in the flesh.
- * The golden bars by his feet are the gates of Hades, which he has broken and torn apart. There are keys floating in the abyss below, which symbolizes that he has entered and conquered both death and Hades.
- * You may also note the skeletal figure who is chained up: that is Death and/or Satan. He has been bound and killed by Christ, which is why all throughout Pascha we sing "Christ has trampled down death by death." The icon depicts Hebrews 2:14, "that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil." The power of the devil and death have been destroyed through the life-giving death of our Savior.
- * The two figures whom Christ has grasped and is pulling from tombs are Adam and Eve, symbolizing that his victory redeems all mankind, even back to the beginning. It also foreshadows the general resurrection of the body before the Final Judgment.
- * To the left, we see three characters: David and Solomon, two of his ancestors according to his fleshly nature. We also see, closest to him, John the Baptizer, who was his forerunner in both life and death.
- * The figures on the right vary from icon to icon, but usually represent Old Testament prophets and saints such as Moses, Abel as a shepherd, and the three youths who were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).
- * The blue shape around Christ is called the Mandorla (which is Italian for almond, which describes its shape). The Mandorla is the uncreated, eternal light of Christ. In the writings of the Eastern Orthodox mystics, God is often prayerfully experienced as light. This is not simply a pretty bright light. It is the same light which filled the apostles with wonder when they witnessed His Transfiguration. It is the light which Christ Himself described as the power of the Kingdom of God (Mark 9:1 Matt 16:28 Luke 9:27). It is the light that filled the once perpetual darkness of Hades when Christ descended and brought life into the realm of death. It is also the light that is seen when one purifies their heart and mind (Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.)
- * The Mandorla becomes progressively darker as it moves toward its center, which is Christ. If God is represented by light, the Mandorla may seem confusing. However, those who seek God will find that the more they know Him, the less they comprehend Him. To know God, to experience Him, is to walk in the darkness of His light, to enter into the mystery of His presence.

The Easter vigil is officially the first service of Easter. In following Christian feast days one will notice that feast days generally begin at sunset on the previous day as in Christmas Eve. The Triduum ("three days) is a series of three worship services interconnected that lead us from Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper and the washing of the disciples feet on Maundy Thursday through his betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and

burial on Friday, through the silence of Holy Saturday. Holy Saturday the day the world stood still for the followers of Jesus. To the celebration of his resurrection Easter morning. The same principle applies to the Jewish reckoning of liturgical time, in which the sabbath begins at dusk and continues to nightfall of the following day. This is reflected in the priestly “refrain” of the Genesis 1 creation story: “and it was evening, and it was morning, the nth day.”

The service that following is lengthy. The readings will take about a half hour depending on how fast one reads.

The Holy Saturday or Easter vigil service is a service of prayer and reflection. It is a service when attended in person has four movements: (1) the Service of Light, a celebration of the light of Christ at which a new fire is kindled from which the Paschal Candle is lit, (2) the Service of Readings, which includes as many as nine readings from the grand story of salvation of the Old and New Testaments interspersed with psalms and canticles, silence and prayers, (3) the Service of Baptism, the primary annual occasion for baptisms (particularly in the early church) and a time for the reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and (4) the Service of the Eucharist, a joyous feast in the presence of the risen Christ and an anticipation of the eschatological banquet of the realm of God.

The above explanation and the service that follows comes from the Presbyterian Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) which is found at this link: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/easter-vigil/>.

Easter Vigil adopted for home use

Service of Light

The service begins in the darkness of night.

Gather together in a darkened room.

Light a candle.

Read:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:5, 9-13).

We are reminded that Jesus Christ came as a light shining in darkness. We as the people of God are a pilgrim people following the "pillar of fire" given to us in Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Service of Readings

The second part of the vigil consists of a series of readings from the Old and New Testaments. These readings provide a panoramic view of what God has done for humanity. Beginning with creation, we are reminded of our delivery from bondage in the exodus, of God's calling us to faithfulness through the cry of the prophets, of God dwelling among us in Jesus Christ, and of Christ's rising in victory from the tomb. The readings thus retell our "holy history" as God's children, summarizing the faith into which we are baptized.

First Reading Genesis 1:1-2:4a

1:1In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so.

16God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night — and the stars. 17God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25God

made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 26Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." 29God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

4These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Second Reading Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. 2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; 3 and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. 4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." 5 And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark, 14 they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind — every bird, every winged creature. 15 They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

17 The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18 The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

8:6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made 7 and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; 9 but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. 10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; 11 and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. 12 Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

13 In the six hundred first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. 15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh — birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth — so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." 18 So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives.

9:8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with

you, as many as came out of the ark. 11I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Third Reading Genesis 22:1-18

1After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2He said, "Take 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 that I shall show you." 3So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. 4On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. 5Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." 6Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. 9When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. 11But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy 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." 13And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." 15The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, 18and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

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How is God good?

Fourth Reading Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

14:10As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. 11They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. 14The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

15Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. 16But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. 17Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. 18And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers."

19The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. 20It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

21Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. 22The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 23The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. 24At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. 25He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

26Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."

27So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. 28The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. 29But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

30Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

15:20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. 21 And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Fifth Reading Isaiah 55:1-11

- 1 Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
- 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
- 3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
- 4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
- 5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.
- 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
- 7 let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
- 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- 10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
- 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
 it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
 and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Sixth Reading Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21;9:4b-6

- 8:1 Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
- 2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
- 3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
- 4 “To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.
- 5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
- 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;
- 7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
- 20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
- 21 endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.”
- 9:4b To those without sense she says,
- 5 “Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
- 6 Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”

Reflect on the goodness of God and God’s creation.
How is God good?

Seventh Reading Ezekiel 36:24-28

24I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. 25I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. 28Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Eighth Reading Ezekiel 37:1-14

1The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." 4Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

7So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Ninth Reading Zephaniah 3:14-20

- 4 Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
- 15 The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
- 16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
- 17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
- 18 as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
- 19 I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
- 20 At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Tenth Reading Romans 6:3-11

3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Reflect on the goodness of God and God's creation.
How is God good?

Gospel Mark 16:1-8

1When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflect on the goodness of God.
How is God good?

Service of Baptism

In the earliest years of the Christian church, baptisms commonly took place at the vigil. So this vigil includes baptism and/or the reaffirmation of baptismal vows. As with the natural symbol of light, water plays a critical role in the vigil. The image of water giving life — nurturing crops, sustaining life, and cleansing our bodies — cannot be missed in this part of the vigil. Nor is the ability of water to inflict death in drowning overlooked. Water brings both life and death. So also there is death and life in baptism, for in baptism we die to sin and are raised to life. Baptism unites believers to Christ's death and resurrection.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed is recited as a summary of one's faith. It is a statement of the Church's core belief in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the creed we use in our baptismal rite.

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Eternal and gracious God, we give you thanks.
In countless ways you have revealed yourself in ages past, and have blessed us with signs of your grace.
We praise you that through the waters of the sea you led your people Israel out of bondage,
into freedom in the land of your promise.
We praise you for sending Jesus your Son,
who for us was baptized in the waters of the Jordan, and was anointed as the Christ by your Holy Spirit. Through the baptism of his death and resurrection you set us free from the bondage of sin and death and give us cleansing and rebirth.

We praise you for your Holy Spirit,
who teaches us and leads us into all truth, filling us with a variety of gifts,
that we might proclaim the gospel to all nations and serve you as a royal priesthood.
We rejoice that you claimed us in our baptism, and that by your grace we are born
anew.

By your Holy Spirit renew us,
that we may be empowered to do your will and continue forever in the risen life of
Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all glory and honor, now and forever. Amen.

REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

Remember your baptism and be thankful.

Make the sign of the cross on your forehead or on someone else saying:
I am (You are) marked with the cross of Christ and seal with the Holy Spirit,
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Service of the Lord's Supper

Though we will not be celebrating the Lord's Supper it is good to remind yourself that when we celebrate on Sunday and other times that the Lord's Supper is The vigil a joyous celebration of the feast of the people of God. The risen Lord invites all to participate in the new life he brings by sharing the feast that he has prepared. We thus look forward to the great messianic feast of the kingdom of God when the redeemed from every time and place "will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). The vigil thus celebrates what God has done, is doing, and will do.

Benediction

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

(Psalm 67:1-3)

