

HOMILY — EASTER VIGIL 2020

The Easter Vigil, which we celebrate tonight, is the “mother of all vigils”, the central Liturgy in the life of the Church. In its fulness, it’s the most impressive, as we begin in the dark, near a blazing fire, in the early hours of Easter morning, to mark the Resurrection of our Saviour.

This year, however, due to the pandemic and the limitations it imposes, it’s quite a bit different. The usual beginnings have been omitted, and with empty churches, the impact of the light of Christ scattering the darkness of the building is absent, as are the feelings of excitement and joy that are usually present.

However, we nonetheless rejoice in the light of Christ — symbolized by the Paschal Candle —, in the glory of His Resurrection, in His love which conquers sin and death. Whether we feel it or not, whether we’re here in church to celebrate it or not, Christ is indeed risen! He has conquered sin and death, and He continues to shine in our hearts and fill us with His grace. This doesn’t change.

That’s why, though things are different this year, we nonetheless rejoice in the Resurrection of Jesus and exult in the beauty of this night — perhaps even especially in the middle of this pandemic. Because the joy that Jesus brings us in His Resurrection is not dimmed! The joy of being forgiven is not forgotten. The joy of knowing that God loves us despite our unworthiness is not withdrawn. The tomb is empty, but our hearts are full.

It’s for this very reason that we celebrate the Resurrection every year; that each year we mark with the most solemnity possible that great and glorious event of God’s love, and we relive, through the many readings, the history of our salvation.

But notice how the readings don’t speak of our sins, of our fall away from God. No! they speak of God’s love for us, of God’s concern for our wellbeing, of God’s work in bringing us back into right relationship with Himself. From our creation in His *image and likeness*, to the fulfilment of His promise made to Abraham, to His promise (through Ezekiel) to cleanse us from our idols, the readings speak to us of God’s saving acts. We recount tonight not the history of our sins but truly the history of our salvation.

And we do this with gratitude, because God has done something wonderful: He has undone the damage of original sin, *wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness* (Exultet), and opened for us the gates of heaven.

This, my brothers and sisters, is the source of our joy! That God hasn’t abandoned us in our sins, hasn’t forsaken us to death, but has Himself come to save us, to give us new life. And there is no greater joy than this. No sickness, no isolation, no loneliness nor any disease can take this joy away from us. Jesus is risen; He can no longer die, and He did this to share His victory with us. *O truly blessed night* indeed, as this night — even in our physical distancing — we rejoice in Love that conquers death.

May the Resurrection of Jesus always be our light and our joy — especially in these days of darkness and sorrow —, and may we share that light and joy, spreading far and wide the Good News that Jesus loves us, that Jesus wants us, that Jesus saves us. Amen.