

Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter - Lectionary: 41

**God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved through him.** John 3:17

Resurrected life is transformational:

as we experience the fullness of graces through relationship with God - Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Resurrected life is intentional:

engaging with God's plan and will for us.

Resurrected life is relational:

sent as we are into the world as missionaries of love and mercy, heart to heart, soul to soul.

The Church teaches that this celebration of the Easter Vigil is the "mother of all vigils", it is the "greatest and most noble of all solemnities". On this holy night, we keep watch, celebrate the resurrection of Christ in the sacraments and await his return in glory. It is the turning point of the Triduum, the Passover of the new covenant, which marks Christ's passage from death to life.

So, we gather around the fire, outside the Church in the midst of the world, and experience the flames dispelling the darkness and lighting up the night. The Paschal Candle, symbol of the "light of Christ, rising in glory" that scatters the "darkness of our hearts and minds", is brought forward. We carry it into the Church and from it each member of the Mystical Body of Christ lights his own candle. Just as the children of Israel were guided at night by the pillar of fire, so Christians follow the risen Christ.

The Gospel of life, which is at the heart of Jesus' message, is meant to be lovingly received day after day by the Church, preached with dauntless fidelity in every age and culture. At the dawn of salvation, the birth of Jesus was proclaimed by the angels as joyful news: "*I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*". Lk 2:10-11 incarnation of the Son of God reveals the full meaning of every human being, and the joy which accompanies the Birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfilment of joy at every child conceived in the womb. cf. Jn 16:21

When Jesus presented the heart of his redemptive mission, he said: "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*". Jn 10:10 By this he means the life of each of the baptized, who as new creations become inheritors of that eternal life in communion with the Father. A life to which every person is freely called in the Son by and made by the power of the Sanctifying Spirit. It is precisely in this "life" that all the aspects and stages of human life achieve their full significance – the supreme good for which we are made.

Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase.¹

The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike—because it marvelously fulfills all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart ^{cf. Rom 2:14–15} the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.²

Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh, ^{cf. Jn 1:14} is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore, every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church’s very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature. ^{cf. Mk 16:15}

Today this [message] is especially pressing because of the extraordinary increase and gravity of threats to the life of individuals and peoples, especially where life is weak and defenseless. In addition to the ancient scourges of poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence and war, new threats are emerging on an alarmingly vast scale.³

To all the members of the Church, your Father in heaven makes this most urgent appeal, that together we offer this world of ours new signs of hope, and work to ensure that a new culture of life will be affirmed, for the building of an authentic civilization of truth and love.⁴ In this celebration, our prayers and reflections – we are challenged to once again renew our resolve to firmly, faithfully, and fruitfully live what we believe.

We are being called to Live in the ‘light of Christ’, a life made possible by His sacrifice of love – His death and resurrection. To allow the fullness of the power of life in the Spirit to be exerted through us, an extra ordinary influence in the hearts and the lives of people the world over. When the Gospel is shared by, we the people of the resurrection, the Holy Spirit draws others to receive the gift of faith and believe. Themselves becoming new creatures in Christ. ^{2 Cor. 5:17} To be a resurrected people in Christ is to be missionary disciples. Warriors of the Church Militant, engaged in a revolution of love for the salvation of the world.

¹ John Paul II, [Evangelium Vitae](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995). #1

² John Paul II, [Evangelium Vitae](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995). #2

³ John Paul II, [Evangelium Vitae](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995). #3

⁴ John Paul II, [Evangelium Vitae](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995). #6

Reflection Questions

1. Consider the interconnectedness of the themes of resurrection, the value of human life, and the mission of the Church as presented in the excerpts. How does the celebration of the Easter Vigil illuminate these relationships?
2. Consider the significance of the symbolism used in the Easter Vigil ceremony, particularly the fire and the Paschal Candle, in conveying the meaning of Christ's resurrection and its implications for believers.
3. Consider the concept of "resurrected life" as described in the text, detailing its intentional, relational, and transformational aspects. How can individuals embody this resurrected life in their daily existence?
4. Consider the challenges and urgency highlighted in the text regarding threats to human life and dignity in the modern world. How does the Church's understanding of the Incarnation inform its response to these challenges?
5. Explore the call to be "missionary disciples" and "Warriors of the Church Militant" in light of the Easter event. What does this imply for the role and responsibilities of individual Christians and the Church as a whole?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Easter Vigil:** The liturgical celebration held on Holy Saturday night, considered the "mother of all vigils," that anticipates and celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- **Holy Saturday:** The day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, a day of waiting and reflection on Christ's burial.
- **Resurrection:** The central tenet of Christian faith, referring to Jesus Christ rising from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion.
- **Triduum:** The three-day liturgical season encompassing Holy Thursday evening, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil, commemorating the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- **Paschal Candle:** A large, decorated candle blessed and lit at the Easter Vigil, symbolizing the light of the risen Christ.
- **Incarnation:** The theological doctrine that God the Son became human in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Gospel of Life:** A term often used to describe the Christian teaching on the sanctity and dignity of all human life from conception to natural death.
- **Natural Law:** The concept that there are inherent moral principles discoverable through human reason that govern human behavior.
- **Redemptive Incarnation:** The belief that God becoming human in Jesus Christ was for the purpose of saving humanity from sin and death.
- **Mystical Body of Christ:** A theological term referring to the Church as a community of believers united with Christ as its head.
- **Missionary Disciples:** Baptized individuals who are called to actively share the Gospel and their faith with others.
- **Church Militant:** A term referring to the Church on earth, engaged in spiritual warfare against evil.
- **Sanctifying Spirit:** Another name for the Holy Spirit, understood as the divine power that makes people holy.