

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

Epistle - [Romans 6:3-11](#)

Brothers and sisters: Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23](#) R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel - [Matthew 28:1-10](#)

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women in reply, "Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you." Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

**I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.
He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.**

*"There has been a great silence in creation, a great silence and stillness. God died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear. The whole earth has kept silence because the King slept the sleep of death. The earth trembled and was still because God had fallen asleep in the flesh. He who is both God and the son of Eve, greatly desiring to free those who lived in darkness and in the shadow of death, descended to the realm of the dead saying to Adam and Eve and all who have slept since the world began, awaken and arise."*¹

The Heart of the Gospel: Understanding the Easter Vigil

FROM PASSIVE OBSERVER TO ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

"Inhabiting" vs. Watching

True participation requires inhabiting the rites as expression and nourishment, rather than watching passively.



Full Immersion in the Word

Engaging with the extensive biblical readings and psalms to be "fully inflamed" by God's Word.



600+
Total
Confessions
Heard

40 Hours
Combined
Priestly Hours

9 Total
Vigil Biblical
Readings

THE FOUNDATION OF IDENTITY

The Paschal Mystery

Christ's death and resurrection are the core substance and foundation of every Christian liturgy.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

The Law of Prayer is the Law of Belief; how we celebrate forms our faith.

Dying to Sin, Living for God

Through baptism, the "old self" is crucified so believers may live in "newness of life."

Sustenance for the Journey

The Eucharist is the "mysterium fidei" that transforms the believer for eternity.

NotebookLM

Summary:

The homily outlines the profound theological, liturgical, and personal significance of the Easter Vigil within the Catholic tradition. The core theme is that the Resurrection of Christ serves as the absolute foundation of both Christian faith and the liturgy. The Easter Vigil, as the "heart of the Triduum," is identified as the Church's most important celebration because it narrates and enacts the Paschal Mystery—the victory of Christ over death.

Key takeaways include:

- **The Identity of the Believer:** Baptism is framed as a burial with Christ and a resurrection into a "newness of life," requiring the believer to be "dead to sin and living for God."
- **Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi:** There is an intrinsic relationship between how the Church prays, what it believes, and how its members live. The liturgy is the primary vehicle for revealing the mystery of God.
- **Active Participation vs. Passive Observation:** True engagement with the liturgy requires spiritual preparation, faith formation, and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Without these, the rites risk being perceived as merely "performative" or "tiring."
- **Signs of Revival:** Recent data, such as a record 600+ confessions heard over 40 hours during Holy Week, suggests a "Holy Spirit Revival" characterized by a renewed desire for transformative relationships with God.

¹ From an ancient homily on Holy Saturday (around mid 7th Century)

More often than not most homilies for the Easter Vigil focus on the results of the passion and resurrection of Christ, for the individual Catholic and especially those who receive the sacraments of initiation this night. Through the Triduum liturgies culminating with this Easter Vigil, we are reaffirmed in our identity as Christians. We are among those for whom the *“old self was crucified with him” ... “that we might no longer be in slavery to sin”... and are now called “to live in newness of life” ... We are seeking Jesus the Crucified who has been raised as he said”*. Many of us here today are embracing this identity and recognizing with renewed conviction that consequently, as St. Paul said, we now *“think of [y]ourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus”*. It would also seem, considering the record 600+ confessions that 4 Priests heard this week over a combined 40 hours... that there are a lot more of you here at Church these past Holy days, with renewed faith, renewed commitment, and renewed desire for transformative relationship with God, Father / Son / Holy Spirit. So many of you are looking to make some changes. Looking to embrace the image God has made you to bear. Looking for Christ Crucified who has been raised from the dead just as he said, our savior.

Brothers and Sisters, this is what Holy Spirit Revival looks like!

Therefore, tonight I'd like to focus on the connection between these days of thanksgiving for our salvation through the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, and what this ought to mean for our celebration of and participation in the Mass. The continuing transformation we seek, living in this newness of life, must have at its center the Eucharistic food for our pilgrim journey, given for us to receive only in our celebrations of thanksgiving, the Mass. And this begins with our celebration tonight, this Easter Vigil.

Recently a relatively small book was written by Goffredo Boselli, a theologian. It is a resource for Priests, liturgists, liturgical scholars, and all laity who want a more profound grasp of this Easter Vigil Liturgy, the most important celebration of the year for disciples of Christ. His thoughts help to clarify the fundamental difference between Catholic and Protestant / Evangelical / Non-Denominational understanding of the meaning of worship as thanksgiving according to scripture, and therefore the varying approaches to worship in a gathered community on Sunday. In the introduction Boselli points out the keystone feature for the Catholic disciple of Christ, he says, *“if the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of faith, it is also, necessarily, the foundation of Christian liturgy, which is none other than the celebration of the paschal mystery. This is true in the case of every liturgy, but it is especially so for the annual feast of Easter. If the Sacred Triduum is the center of the liturgical year, the Easter Vigil is the heart of the Triduum. For this reason, the Easter Vigil is the church’s most important liturgy; it celebrates the mystery of Christ’s victory over death, which is the substance of every Christian liturgy.*

Mr. Boselli also clearly articulates the struggles both the faithful and all others here tonight, will experience. Those who are unprepared and Catholics who invest less in their own faith formation, education and practice of the faith, will struggle more than others. If we are to take our faith, our relationship with God seriously – we must also take seriously the way in which each of us is engaged during the Mass and so take responsibility to understand it. This Easter Vigil is beautiful, but our ability to recognize and enter into the beauty is dependent upon our understanding and closeness to the Holy Spirit.

I remember my first experience of the Easter Vigil. A Catholic friend of mine invited me to an Easter Vigil Mass, although the purpose of the Divine Liturgy isn't an evangelization event designed to attract non-believers or instruct newcomers, I said yes, and by the grace of God the experience had a profound effect on me. In my soul I was able to recognize what Boselli notes in his book, that this *celebration.. is richest in rites and symbols, most abundant in texts and songs, most intense in signs and gestures*. All of my senses were challenged and moved. Because I was beginning to open the door to God, it was the action of the Holy Spirit within me that brought about the greatest effect. Although this liturgy is the church's longest

and most elaborate liturgy, in which the most extensive arrangement of biblical readings is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit kept me engaged, utilizing the beauty of the celebration and the intensity of the message, despite it being *the most demanding liturgy and, at times, the most tiring*. In part, this is why wherever I'm the pastor I always insist that we read every single reading, all 9 of them and chant all the Psalms in-between! If we can't manage full immersion baptism, let's be fully immersed in the living Word of God and fully enflamed, impelled to worship with every fiber of our being tonight and at every Mass.

Boselli continues with an exhortation to the Priest celebrants, everyone serving the liturgy and all disciples present, he says, *we must be aware that in the Easter Vigil, we are experiencing the essence of Christianity and, at the same time, have in our hands the most intimate reality of the Christian message, because the resurrection of Christ is the heart of the Gospel*. This means that long before tonight, we ought to have sought out, engaged in, and shared with others formation and education in our faith. What we believe and why we celebrate in this way. All year long we must seek to understand the meaning and value of the signs and symbols. We must be more familiar with Christ as the Word than with the words of our most beloved, most respected, most preferred person or persons. More than the words of our favorite songs, lines from movies, or the most masterful text in literature. We must be immersed in the graces we receive, growing in the virtues which are infused, and cultivating our hunger and thirst for the Eucharistic food that sustains us on our journey and transforms us for our eternity. As well, as we intentionally engage with the Holy Spirit in all these endeavors, we will grow in understanding of the reasons for divisions among Christians as they relate to the worship of God. The more we are attentive to all of this throughout the year and going ever deeper during the season of Lent and Holy Week, the more able we will be to enter fully into this Easter celebration of the Resurrection of Christ and the extraordinary meaning of our salvation. *Celebrating these rites means not watching them passively but inhabiting them, recognizing them as both an expression and a nourishment of one's faith.*²

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi.

"The Law Of What Is Prayed [Is] The Law Of What Is Believed [Is] The Law Of What Is Lived"

At the beginning of Mass, during the 'Penitential Act', these words are spoken by the Priest, *"Brethren [brothers and sisters], let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries,"* to call the faithful to pause and humbly prepare their hearts to celebrate the sacred mysteries (the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus). As well, in the Eucharistic Acclamation after the consecration, the Priest declares *"The mystery of faith,"* prompting a response from the faithful. It calls the faithful into a more deeply focused state of prayerful awareness, of awe and amazement in relation to the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist should be experienced as a "mysterium fidei" / mystery of faith, and celebrated authentically, with clear awareness that the "intellectus fidei" / "understanding of faith", has a primordial relationship to the Church's liturgical action. That is to say, there is an intrinsic relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, and the "primacy of the liturgical action" which is very much part of the *lex vivendi*. In fact, the liturgy cannot be treated apart from the mystery of faith, because both faith and Eucharistic worship draw their source from the same event: Christ's gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery. The Mass forms faith, and faith receives the Mass—because they come from the same divine reality.

The concept of *mystery* with regard to God does not refer to a mysterious reality, hidden and veiled from humanity, synonymous with an *enigma* or *puzzle*. The mystery of God, a mystery "*kept secret for long*

² Goffredo Boselli, [Fire of Love, Water of Life: Exploring the Meaning and the Beauty of the Easter Vigil](#) (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2024), 1–2.

ages”,³ was revealed by God in the life of his Son Jesus to the point of identifying it with him: “*The mystery of God [is] Jesus Christ, and him crucified*”,⁴ recalls the apostle, St. Paul. God the Father has revealed all of himself, and in a definitive way, through Jesus Christ, making himself fully known not only to Israel but to all humanity. Christ is not simply the revealer of the mystery of God; he himself *is* the mystery of God. His whole life, culminating in his death and resurrection, is the highest summit of the revelation of God. The Passover of Jesus is the mystery of God. Every year in the celebration of Easter, the church confesses that the paschal mystery and the mystery of God are one and the same mystery. If, according to the New Testament, only the mystery can fully reveal the mystery, we can also say that only the celebration of the paschal mystery fully reveals the paschal mystery. It reveals it more than any theology, any magisterial text, any catechesis, teaching, or preaching. Unlike theology, words alone are not enough for the liturgy to narrate and celebrate the richness of the life of Christ. If, according to the ancient adage, the church believes as it celebrates (*lex orandi, lex credenda*), this means that the church *believes* the paschal mystery as it *celebrates* the paschal mystery. The quality of every believer’s and every Christian community’s faith in the risen Christ can be seen in the way they celebrate his resurrection.⁵

No one can fail to understand that the Divine Eucharist bestows upon the Christian people an incomparable dignity. Not only while the Sacrifice is offered and the Sacrament is received, but as long as the Eucharist is kept in our churches and oratories, Christ is truly Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us'. Day and night He is in our midst, He dwells with us, full of grace and truth. He restores morality, nourishes virtues, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the weak. He proposes His own example to those who come to Him that all may learn to be, like Himself, meek and humble of heart and to seek not their own interests but those of God. Anyone who approaches this august Sacrament with special devotion and endeavors to return generous love for Christ's own infinite love, will experience and fully understand—not without spiritual joy and fruit—how precious is the life hidden with Christ in God and how great is the value of converse with Christ, for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road of holiness.”⁶

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Emmanuel	A title for Christ meaning "God with us," signifying His presence in the midst of the faithful, particularly in the Eucharist.
Intellectus Fidei	Translated as "understanding of faith"; it refers to the primordial relationship between the intellect and the Church’s liturgical actions.
Lex Credendi	The law of what is believed; refers to the essential doctrines and truths held by the Church.
Lex Orandi	The law of what is prayed; refers to the Church's liturgical and prayer life as a primary source of faith.
Lex Vivendi	The law of what is lived; the application of faith and prayer to the daily moral and spiritual life of the believer.
Mysterium Fidei	"The mystery of faith"; a term used during the Mass to focus awareness on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery.
Paschal Mystery	The core of the Christian message involving the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Sacraments of Initiation	The sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) through which individuals are fully incorporated into the Christian community.
Triduum	The three-day period (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday) that marks the culmination of the liturgical year.

³ Rom 16:25

⁴ cf. 1 Cor 2:1–2

⁵ Goffredo Boselli, *Fire of Love, Water of Life: Exploring the Meaning and the Beauty of the Easter Vigil* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2024), 5–6.

⁶ Mysterium Fidei, Encyclical of Pope St. Paul VI September 3, 1965, p52