

The Easter Vigil

O truly blessed Night, sings the Exsultet of the Easter Vigil, which alone deserved to know the time and the hour when Christ rose from the realm of the dead. [CCC 647]

The Easter Vigil is the highlight of the liturgical celebration of the Church's year. It is the climax of the Easter Triduum. It is celebrated between sunset on Holy Saturday, and sunrise on Easter Sunday when the community gathers to remember and celebrate the dying and rising of Jesus.

The four elements of the celebration are The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil, the Liturgy of the Word, the Baptismal Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Solemn Beginning of the Vigil (Service of Light)

The Easter Vigil commences in darkness with the Service of Light. The Service of Light includes the blessing of the new fire and the lighting of the Easter Candle (Paschal Candle). The procession with the Easter Candle into the darkened church and the passing of light from proclaims person to person dispels the darkness of the church, symbolising Christ, the 'Light of the World' [see John 8:12]. Following the lighting of the candles, the Exsultet is sung. This is a hymn that joyfully the resurrection of Christ.

Liturgy of the Word

Through the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks directly to us. At the Easter Vigil, in the seven readings of the Old Testament and the two readings of the New Testament, we hear the story of salvation. The story of salvation culminates in the Gospel story of the resurrection of Jesus. The Gloria and the Alleluia are sung for the first time since the beginning of Lent.

Baptismal Liturgy

From the earliest times in the Church, the Easter Vigil ceremony was when catechumens were baptised, confirmed and received into the community of the Church. They had been through a very vigorous time of preparation and this particular night was seen as the most fitting time for the initiation ceremony to take place. Pope Pius XII, in the liturgical reform he instituted, reintroduced this time for the baptism of adults who wished to be members of the Catholic Church. After the Liturgy of the Word, the catechumens/elect, (those who are to be initiated into the Catholic Church) are presented to the parish community. The priest blesses the water in the baptismal font and then invites those seeking Baptism to come forth, renounce sin and profess their faith. The new members are baptised with the

new water of Baptism and with the words, '(Name), I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The newly baptised are then confirmed.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

At the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the newly Baptised and Confirmed, are invited to receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion for the first time. This completes their full initiation into the faith community, the Church.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURE IN THIS LESSON

Luke 24: 13-35 | The Walk to Emmaus

It was when these two disciples pleaded with Jesus to stay with them and committed themselves to share the Paschal mystery with him that 'their eyes were opened and they recognised him' [Luke 24:31] [GNT]. Luke is careful to say that they 'recognised him'. They did not see him with the eyes of the body, 'he disappeared from their sight' [Luke 24:31] [GNT], but with the eyes of faith.

Their experience of the risen Jesus was personal, but it was not meant for them alone. They must take it back into the believing community. In Jerusalem, they find the eleven and their companions gathered together. Their experience is confirmed: 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon' [Luke 24:34] [GNT].

The two disciples were not the only ones to lose hope at the time of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Luke presents their story because it illustrates the experience of many of Jesus' early followers, and because it expresses the way in which Luke's readers too will experience in their lives, 'the presence of the crucified and risen Jesus.'

*The Gospel according to Saint Luke. An Introductory Commentary.
Michael Fallon MSC. Chevalier Press. 2007.*

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MAIN TEACHING AND LEARNING POINTS

- God raised Jesus to new life.
- At the Easter Vigil, the faith community the Church, celebrates with joy the resurrection of Jesus.

EASTER

Easter is the greatest celebration for Christians because through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have received the hope of new life, the life of God. The resurrection is the reason for our faith, hope and courage. The Easter Vigil begins on Holy Saturday after sunset and is the first official celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. There are four parts to the Easter Vigil liturgy (see background information).

GOD'S WORD

Luke 24:13-25 | The Walk to Emmaus

Parent: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Child responds: *Glory to you, O Lord.* (While saying the words, trace a small cross with the thumb on the forehead, lips and heart.)

On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem, and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. Jesus said to them, 'What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?'

They stood still, with sad faces. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?' 'What things?' he asked. 'The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth,' they answered. 'This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did. Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified. And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb, but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is

alive. Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.'

Then Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?' And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.

As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; but they held him back, saying, 'Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark.'

So he went in to stay with them. He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, 'Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?'

They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others and saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!' The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognised the Lord when he broke the bread. [GNT]

The Gospel of the Lord.

Child responds: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Ask your child the following questions to help them reflect on the Scripture.

- **Where were the two followers of Jesus going?**
- **Who joined the followers along the way?**
- **Why do you think the followers did not recognise Jesus?**
- **How did the followers describe who Jesus was?**
- **What news had the followers heard about Jesus that had surprised them?**
- **Through what action did the followers recognise Jesus?**
- **What did they say when they had realised that Jesus had been amongst them?**
- **Why do you think the followers got up at once and returned to Jerusalem?**
- **What do you think this story tells to us about Jesus?**

PRAYER REFLECTION

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Child Christ is risen like the sun, Alleluia!

All The light of Christ shines over the whole world, Alleluia!

Child Christ is risen, Alleluia!

All Christ is truly risen, Alleluia!

Reader Let us rejoice and be glad. Alleluia!

All Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.
Alleluia!



The Easter Vigil

Describe in detail what occurs at the Easter Vigil.
Use the 'Easter Vigil (*Parts Explained*)' sheet to assist you.

The Easter Vigil begins on _____
after _____

There are 4 parts to the Easter Vigil liturgy.

**The Solemn Beginning of
the Vigil (Service of Light)**

Liturgy of the Word

Baptismal Liturgy

Liturgy of the Eucharist
