

## Closing Prayer

O God,  
your saving plan has brought us  
to the glory of this night.  
Slaves, we become your sons and daughters,  
poor, your mercy makes us rich,  
sinners, you count us among your saints.

Bring us to know the place that is ours  
in the unfolding story of your purpose,  
and instil in our hearts  
the wonder of your salvation.

Grant this through Jesus Christ,  
our passover and our peace,  
who lives with you now and always  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Easter Vigil<sup>2</sup>

CPL • LBC Year B Easter Vigil.odt • 2021-03-20

<sup>2</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for Years A, B and C from the sacramentary : the ICEL collects / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

## The Easter Vigil

### Principal Service readings

*The following are the essential readings for the Easter Vigil, for other readings refer to the lectionary*

Exodus 14.10-31; 15.20-21 The crossing of the sea  
*Canticle:* Exodus 15.1b-13,17,18 The song of victory  
Romans 6.3-11 Baptized into Christ  
Psalm 114 Crossing the waters  
Mark 16.1-8 The empty tomb

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The empty tomb*

<sup>1</sup>When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' <sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>But 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. <sup>7</sup>But 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.' <sup>8</sup>So 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.

Mark 16.1-8 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

In Mark's account of Easter morning, the shortest and, generally believed by scholars to be the earliest account, we see Mark portraying a strangely enigmatic account of the resurrection, portraying Easter as an event, as a mystery, and as an invitation.

As an event, Mark chooses to focus not on the appearance of the risen Christ but on the finding of the empty tomb. It is a tangible sign that something extraordinary has happened. It defies the ordinary expectations of the women who have gone there to anoint the dead body of Jesus. (The body had been buried in haste on the Friday, before the Sabbath started.) As they go they are asking each other who will roll the stone away from the entrance? When they get to the tomb they find that the entrance stone, which was very large, had already been rolled away. As they enter the tomb, they see a 'young man' dressed in white. In Matthew's gospel it says clearly this is an angel, but in Mark's version it remains ambiguous, but Mark probably thought of him as an angel, for it is mentioned that he was wearing white. While they do not see the risen Jesus, they are told by the young man instead, 'He has been raised; he is not here' (Mark 16.6). The tomb is empty. Jesus has gone. But the women are told that Jesus has gone ahead of them to Galilee, and that they are to see him there, as 'he told you' (16.7).

In this unfathomable, incomprehensible mystery we are left to ponder Mark's brief account. We can ask about the young man, who is he? Where is he from? How did he know? And then again, why didn't Jesus hang around to be seen?

However, in its brevity and complexity this gospel passage invites us to draw ever more closely into the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. What is our reaction? Are we puzzled? Are we willing to believe that he has risen? These questions invite us to affirm our Easter faith, our own Easter amazement, and our own Easter joy.

## Quotations

1

We proclaim the resurrection of Christ when his light illuminates the dark moments of our existence.

Pope Francis, 1936–

2

Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.

*Surprised by hope: rethinking heaven, the resurrection, and the mission of the church* / N.T. Wright. 2007

3

And now brothers, I will ask you a terrible question, and God knows I ask it also of myself. Is the truth beyond all truths, beyond the stars, just this: that to live without him is the real death, that to die with him the only life?

*The magnificent defeat* / Frederick Buechner. 1966

4

To be sure, it was not Easter Sunday but Holy Saturday, but, the more I reflect on it, the more this seems to be fitting for the nature of our human life: we are still awaiting Easter; we are not yet standing in the full light but walking toward it full of trust.

*Milestones: memoirs, 1927-1977* / Pope Benedict XVI. 1977

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Resurrection; paschal mystery; baptism/confirmation; eucharist; symbols: community, fire/light, water, oil, garment, bread and wine, cross