

Reflecting
on the Easter Vigil



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

The Vigil is a great celebration of Resurrection. The light of Christ would normally be carried into the church, declaring light in darkness!



Light a candle or tealight in a dark room.



Listen to *'The Exsultet: Easter Vigil Proclamation'*.

During this service we remember the story of our salvation: the ancient stories of creation, the journey through the desert and eventually to the Easter Alleluia. If you have a Bible you might like to choose a few of the readings and reflect on the saving grace of God.



Genesis 1:1-2:2

The first story of creation.

Genesis 22:1-18

The sacrifice of Abraham.

Exodus 14:15-15:1

The flight out of Egypt.

Isaiah 54:5-14

With everlasting love the Lord is with you.

Isaiah 55:1-11

Come to the water all who are thirsty.

Baruch 3;9-15,32-4:4

In the radiance of the Lord make your way to the light.

Ezekiel 36: 16-17,18-28

I will give you a new heart.

The Alleluia has been buried throughout Lent: in the same way as a bulb sprouts, the Alleluia rises at the Vigil. With the proclamation of the Easter Alleluia the Gospel is also proclaimed.



Questions to ponder:

- As you pray with the Gospel, imagine what it would have been like for the women.
- What would you have done if you had been there, how would you have reacted?

From the Gospel according to Matthew 28:1-10



After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

The Gospel of the Lord.



Fr Chris Thomas reflects...

I recently went to a conference to listen to a couple whose son had been murdered some years back. Barry and Margaret Mizen's son Jimmy died on the day after his 16th birthday, after buying his first Lottery ticket. He and his older brother Harry were waiting in a local bakery when Jimmy stood up to another customer who barged past them. The customer was enraged and threw objects at him, one of which was a glass dish which cut into Jimmy's neck, severing his main artery. Jimmy died in the shop.

Barry told of three particular visits in the days following his son's murder. One was from a former parish priest. Barry said 'He came to our house and he just stood and cried. No pious words. He just stood there and cried with me.' Another was from a religious sister, the head teacher at the school of one of their younger children. She said: 'Do you feel a little bit of joy in your heart?' And Barry said there was a little glimmer of joy. She said:

'That's Jimmy. That's God.' A Muslim man who lived and worked locally also visited the Mizens. Barry said 'On the day Jimmy died he came to our front door. I opened the door and he's standing there and I'm standing there. We didn't say anything. We just hugged: two dads sharing their grief.'

As they shared their story, I felt it was one of courage, bravery, brokenness and vulnerability and ultimately of forgiveness and new life. It's a story that is replicated in the lives of millions of people in our own country at the moment and in many other places as COVID-19 wreaks its havoc. I have to say it's when I hear stories like the Mizens or stories of people going to great lengths to support one another, when I am told of people standing together in common humanity that I know Jesus is alive

You see, the women at the tomb arrived there full of fear, all their dreams and hopes crushed. They were not at all sure what the future would hold for them and their friends. Matthew says that they stood there not knowing what to think, paralysed by the events that had taken place and what happened? They experienced the risen Jesus. Matthew has a beautiful little phrase, which we tend to pass over as a purely cerebral response 'and they remembered his words.' In Jewish tradition when you remember something you make it real, it lives. So, when Matthew tells us that they remembered Jesus' words he's saying that somewhere within themselves they knew that he was alive. Deep within, the angel's message took hold: 'Why look among the dead for someone who is alive. He is not here he is risen.' They experienced his presence.

One of the questions we all have to ask is where does our faith lie? Is our faith in the bald facts of the story of the resurrection? Is it in the words of the Bible? Or in the Church who gave us the Bible? Or is our faith in a living Lord who is bigger than Church and Bible, a Lord who is with us and whose presence gives our lives an energy and a dynamism that we wouldn't have without him? I came across this during the week by the Canadian Oblate priest Ronald Rolheiser: 'The resurrection of Christ challenges us to new life – to believe, precisely that there are surprises hidden at the heart of death: that every scream, tear and cry is redeemed, and that God's laughter is stronger than death. Ultimately, belief in the resurrection asks us to believe that, despite a strong experience to the contrary, reality is gracious, light does triumph over darkness, love over self-interest, justice over oppression, peace over chaos, fulfilment over hunger. Faith in the resurrection is the trust that, in the end, everything is good.'

As we enter into the Easter season let's pray that in the midst of chaos that is all around us at this time, we discover the presence of the risen Jesus, probably, and maybe most powerfully, in the least expected people and places.

The whole of the Vigil is profoundly symbolic, sins have been overcome forever – we are saved.



Questions to ponder:

- Do we have a resurrection story in our life?
- How can we share it with others?

Our resurrection stories are important in our lives, we need to share them when we can.