



Wesley House
Cambridge

Easter Vigil

Introduction

Sisters and brothers, on this most holy night in which Christ passed from death to life, we gather in vigil, prayer and celebration. We listen to the story of God's redeeming acts. We hear from the book of Exodus how God brought his people out of slavery and led them by cloud and fire and through a parted sea. We recall God's word through Ezekiel, to a people worn down and hopeless, exiled from all that gave them their identity and everything that was familiar - that even in the midst of this God would bring them new life. And we hear the Exultet, which proclaims the mystery of Christ's resurrection in the context of that story of God's eternal will to save and restore his people, and the whole creation.

These are strange and difficult days we have been living, in the latter part of Lent and through Holy Week. Much of it has been behind closed doors, cut off from some of the things and people that give our lives shape, trying to keep each other safe, trying to keep cheerful, aware of fear, grief and the reality of suffering and death.

These are strange times in which to proclaim Christ's resurrection and to sing alleluia. But we do so in order to tell the truth: that Christ comes, and suffers, and is raised to life in the midst of the world's reality and brokenness and anguish.

During the service it is traditional to light the Easter candle to remain alight during the Easter season and to be the light from which all baptismal candles are lit during the year. At the appropriate moment you might like to light a candle at home and burn it for a short time each day between now and Pentecost.

The service begins in near darkness with a song such as the Taizé chant below:

***Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;
wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!***

<https://youtu.be/w5VxXp3CKww>

Prayer

God of all holiness
your promises stand unshaken through all generations
and you lift up all who are burdened and brought low.
Renew our hope in you,
as we wait for the coming in glory of Jesus Christ our redeemer,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Hope in darkness

Exodus 14: 19-30a

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

***Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;
wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!***

<https://youtu.be/w5VxXp3CKww>

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you

up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;
wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!*
<https://youtu.be/w5VxXp3CKww>

Time for Reflection on what resurrection means in a time of coronavirus

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near;
wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart!*
<https://youtu.be/w5VxXp3CKww>

Proclaiming resurrection

The Easter Candle is lit and placed centrally

Christ yesterday and today:
**the beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega;**

his are all times and ages
**to him be all glory and dominion,
for ever and ever. Amen**

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
banish all darkness from our hearts and minds

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia

The Exultet is heard sung or read
<https://youtu.be/ONWj34dgA4g>

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!
Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendour,
radiant in the brightness of your King!

Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!
Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Saviour shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God's people!
It is truly right that with full hearts and minds and voices
we should praise the unseen God, the all-powerful Father,
and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ
(...)

This is our Passover feast,
when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.
This is the night
when first you saved our ancestors:
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery
and led them dry-shod through the sea.
This is the night
when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin!
This is night
when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.
This is the night
when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave
(...)

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
(...)

O happy fault,
O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!
Most blessed of all nights,
chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!
Of this night scripture says:
"The night will be as clear as day:
it will become my light, my joy."
The power of this holy night dispels all evil,
washes guilt away, restores lost innocence,
brings mourners joy;
it casts out hatred, brings us peace,
and humbles earthly pride.
Night truly blessed when heaven is wedded to earth
and we are reconciled with God!
Therefore, heavenly Father,
in the joy of this night,
receive our evening sacrifice of praise,

your Church's solemn offering.
Accept this Easter candle,
a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire that glows to the honour of God.
Let it mingle with the lights of heaven
and continue bravely burning
to dispel the darkness of this night!
May the Morning Star which never sets
find this flame still burning:
Christ, that Morning Star,
who came back from the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all creation,
your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Lights are switched on and Alleluias are sung such 758 in Singing the Faith
<https://www.ionabooks.com/lanotattachments/download/file/id/421/store/1.mp3>

Alleluia

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 worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Alleluia!

Reaffirmation of baptism

Easter has often been the time when candidates for baptism were presented, after preparing during Lent. It is also a moment to remember and reaffirm our own baptism and our new identity in Christ.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
through the paschal mystery
we have been buried with Christ in Baptism,
so that we may rise with him to a new life.
Let us affirm the faith
in which we were baptized
and in which we live and grow.

I ask you therefore:

Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do believe and trust in God the Son?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son Our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried:
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again,
he ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Lord God almighty,
the radiance of your glory lights up our hearts.
Enable us to truly understand the waters in which we are cleansed,
the Spirit by which we are reborn,
and the blood by which we were redeemed;
that in our earthly pilgrimage
we may walk more closely with our risen Saviour and Lord;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

An Easter Hymn is sung such as: The day of resurrection (Singing the Faith 311)

https://youtu.be/Mglx_ojW1Y

The day of resurrection,
earth, tell it out abroad!
The passover of gladness,
the passover of God!
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ hath brought us over
with hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal

of resurrection light;
and, listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain
his own "All hail!" and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain.

Now let the heavens be joyful,
let earth her song begin;
the round world keep high triumph,
and all that is therein.
Let all things seen and unseen
their notes in gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen,
our joy that has no end.

Intercessions

God our redeemer, who brought Israel out of slavery and Jesus out of the tomb,
Set us free from sin and death and give us new life in Christ

Risen Christ, whom we seek in vain among the dead,
Meet us in darkness, uncertainty and grief with your word of life

You who came to your friends behind locked doors,
Come to all who are isolated and fearful with your peace.

You in whom the whole creation will be restored,
Bring hope to a hurting world

You who passed through death and burst the gates of Hell,
Comfort those who mourn tonight, strengthen all who care, and give light to those in the shadow of death

You who walked beside bewildered disciples, and went ahead of your friends into Galilee
Come with us, though the journey may be long: you who have promised to be with us, even to the end of the age.

Our Father in heaven...

A closing hymn may be sung such as:

Hymn Hamba nathi mkhululi wethu
(Come with me, my redeemer)
<https://youtu.be/S1DawD7YulU>

The clip also has a second verse:

Si hamba naye. Si hlala naye. Si lala naye. Si vuka naye.

(Come with us, sit down with us, lie down with us, wake with us)

Blessing

God our Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
and may almighty God bless you.
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!