

Faith in 5
Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday
Easter: Week 1
Adults

PART II (This follows Part I: Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and the Triduum)

1. **Easter Vigil** is a great solemnity that begins after nightfall. It is rich in tradition and meaning. Priests wear white vestments, signifying joy and celebration. Candles may be provided to the faithful who attend. Lights of the church are off and there is great anticipation in the air! The following describes what you may witness during this amazing celebration (please note, there may be slight variations of what is outlined here according to regional differences, parish guidelines and the presider's directives).

Solemn Beginning of the Vigil

Blessing of the Easter Fire and procession of the Paschal candle: The blessing of the Easter Fire generally occurs outside of the church. The priest enters the church with the Paschal candle and forms a series of cuts and marks on the candle as he recites: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega. All time belongs to Him, and all the ages. To Him be glory and power through every age and forever". After the cuts are made, the priest may insert grains of incense into the candle in the form of a cross. The lighted Paschal candle slowly processes inside the darkened church, and pauses three times, with the announcement: "The Light of Christ". A minister will take a flame from the Paschal candle to light the candles of the faithful and the flame is passed on to another candle. Soon the whole church is illuminated by candlelight! The Paschal candle finally makes its way to the sanctuary where it is incensed. The Paschal candle is used throughout the year, for the Easter season, baptisms, and funerals. In some churches, the custom is to continue the liturgy by candlelight or subdued lighting until the Gloria.

Easter Proclamation (Exultet): This is a song, rejoicing in Lightness overcoming the darkness and the glory of the Resurrection. How fitting to give praise to God for His faithfulness and love for His people, from the beginning of time to the resurrection and for us today! We have been brought out of darkness into His marvelous Light!

Liturgy of the Word

(9 readings provided, 7 responsorial psalms) The stories recall highlights of salvation history, God's plan, and care for His people. Depending on your parish, you may have 3-5 readings, the Epistle and Gospel. According to church rubric, three of the readings must come from the Old Testament. The story of the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15-15:1), where God triumphantly saved Israel from the Egyptians is **always** proclaimed. The psalm response is sung after each of the readings followed by a short prayer. After the readings from the Old Testament, Gloria in Excelsis Deo is sung. Joyous music and praise abound! Altar candles are lit, the lights are on, bells are rung, Alleluia (God be praised)! The celebration continues with the Epistle, Gospel, and homily.

Baptismal Liturgy and Celebration of Reception

The catechumens are called up to the sanctuary during this part of the liturgy. They are anointed with the Oil of the Catechumens. This is our opportunity as a community to pray for them.

Litany of the Saints: in this song, we prayerfully invoke the names of holy men and women to help us in our journey of faith. The litany includes the Virgin Mary and the Angels; Patriarchs and Prophets; Apostles and disciples; all holy men and women of God. Pause and reflect– how powerful it is that we are joining with the saints in prayer!

Blessing of Baptismal Water: the water is blessed by the priest in front of the faithful. The use of holy water reminds us of our baptism.

Baptism: In the presence of the faithful and their godparents/sponsors, those entering the faith are baptized. Water is poured over the head of the catechumen each time as the Trinity is invoked, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. For the adults, they may don a white gown as a sign of being cleansed of sin and brought into new life. The godparent/sponsor will take a candle and receive the flame from the Paschal candle. The candle is presented to the newly baptized, symbolizing the Light of Christ in their lives.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises – This is a time for the rest of the faithful to renew and reaffirm our faith through a series of questions, of what we believe as Catholics. We renounce Satan and all his evil works. The faithful are sprinkled with Holy Water. When we are blessed in this manner, make the Sign of the Cross.

Depending on your parish, the Celebration of Reception may be celebrated here. It involves the laying on of hands, anointing the baptized with Chrism oil, and administering the Sacrament of Confirmation. The oil marks the anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Mass continues, in accordance with Church guidelines. The newly baptized receive Holy Communion and may receive under both species. After a concluding prayer, a solemn blessing is given, and the faithful are dismissed, Christ is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

- 2. Easter Sunday** Jesus Christ is risen, He is triumphant over sin and death; we have much to be thankful to God for! Because of His great love for us, we have the promise of Eternal Life through the risen Christ! As Catholics, we will continue to celebrate the Easter Octave (eight days) until the following Sunday. We have the opportunity to continue to reflect and rejoice in God’s great love. This prolonged celebration mirrors the practice of the ancient Jews, where celebrations lasted for seven days with a solemn celebration on the eighth day. Let us approach the season with Easter joy!