

HOLY SATURDAY, C

THE RESURRECTION: A CELEBRATION OF THE OLD IN THE NEW

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen from the dead” (Lk. 24: 5, 6)

We Wait in Hope: On Holy Saturday Vigil or Easter Vigil ceremony, the Church invites us to celebrate the waiting of the people of God for the Risen Christ. It is a night of hope fulfilled. We begin with the Blessing of Light to commemorate Christ, the Light of the world (Jn. 8: 12). We have the Liturgy of the Word, where we recall the history of salvation from creation to the slavery in and deliverance from Egypt of the people of Israel, in the words of the prophets we encounter God who keep His Covenant for ever as they are fulfilled in Christ, the Redeemer. Then we have the ceremonies of Baptism, reception, and confirmation, during which we all renew our baptismal vows. In our parish, we have three of our members who will be baptised into the new life in Christ; two will be received into the Church and six will be confirmed. These are signs of growth, faith, and love in our midst. For these we are grateful to God. We pray that they may always find joy in serving the Lord all the days of their lives. The last part is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, where we share in the banquet of Christ’s Body and Blood, with our new members, in anticipation of the eternal banquet that awaits us in heaven. This is the hope we are all awaiting.

The Birth of a New Creation: The entire liturgy of this night is much deeper than what we just described. There is a revelation of a new creation in the Resurrection, which we celebrate tonight. The First reading from the Book of Genesis (1: 1—2:2) presents the story of creation. In it the first to be created was light: “And God said, let there be light, and there was light” (Gen. 1: 3). Light was created because first because “darkness was upon the deep” (Gen. 1: 2). Tonight, we celebrate Christ, whose resurrection is “an eruption of light.” The Resurrection is the beginning of a New Creation. For since the old creation was darkened by the disobedience of the First Adam, a New Creation brought about by the obedience of the Second Adam, who Himself is Light, became necessary. So that those who walked in darkness might see a great light (Is. 9: 2). Just as light was the first to be created in the first instance, so in the second, light is the first gift of the Father through the Resurrection of His Son. Thus, a New Creation begins with the power of Christ, the Light of the world, risen from the dead. Death is conquered, darkness is broken as the world glows with life and light in the Risen Christ.

Christ the Light of the World; After the blessing of the Easter fire, the Easter or Paschal Candle is blessed, lit, and carried by the priest leading the people of God in a procession of the new people of God in faith and worship. In the light-led procession, we recall the journey of the children of Israel, who led by the pillar fire by night (Ex. 13: 21) walked through the wilderness for forty years before entering the promised land. It should be noted that this “pillar of fire” prefigured Christ, the light of the world, who will lead the new Israel, not an earthly promised land but to the eternal Jerusalem. This is what this night also signifies. “This is the night that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin.” Like the children who sang songs of praises with Moses (cf. Ex. 15; Ps. 136; Rev. 15; 3), we too sing the great Exultet in praise of God, the giver of this night of nights, “when Christ broke the prison bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld.”

He is Risen: The Gospel Reading (Lk. 24: 1-) affirms the facts of Christ’s Resurrection: “It was early on Sunday morning,” St. Luke tells us, “... the women went to the tomb ... but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” They were asked by two men dressed in dazzling white: “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen from the dead.” They broke the news. This is the night of the Resurrection, “when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld.” It is the night of great fulfilment of all the promises of God and every covenant He ever made with man. The Resurrection puts a seal on God’s faithful relationship with His people. This is the reason we recall our entire salvation history in the Seven Readings from the Old Testament and Psalms, and from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans to enable trace, in Scripture and in history, how God has been faithful to His chosen people. This night sets us apart from non-believers as the Exultet proclaims: “This is the night that even now, throughout the world, sets Christian believers apart from worldly vices and from the gloom of sin, leading them to grace and joining them to his holy ones.”

My dear friends, this is a joyful night. Let the joy of this night increase our love and faith in God, who keeps His promises and Covenant ever in mind. The message of this night is clear. It is a message of hope. Hope that God always has a perfect plan. That from despair God can give us hope, from suffering we can embrace joy, and from death life can be restored. Let this endure in our hearts to keep us going even when the race is tough and rough. Our prayer tonight is that “the sanctifying power of this night may dispel wickedness, wash faults

away, restore innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drive out hatred, foster concord, and bring down the mighty.”