

## ***Easter Vigil and Easter***

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- All Christian voices ring out all over the world this evening:  
*“Alleluia, The Lord is risen!”*...the word *“Alleluia”*, from the Hebrew *“hallelu-jah”*, meaning *“Praise God”*.
- As I mentioned on Good Friday, the Passion of Christ was bittersweet—very bitter in recalling the sorrows and agonies of Our Lord, of His Blessed Mother, and of those courageous enough to stand with Him to Calvary’s summit.
- And yet...paradoxically...so very sweet as well...in our realization that Jesus—God—has done all of that for mankind...for you, for me...out of sheer gratuitous love for us...despite our faults, despite our failures, despite the treacheries of sin.
- His was...and IS...a true love without boundaries...a love which saved nothing for Himself, even to the sacrifice of His very life that we might be given opportunity to be saved from the eternal consequences of sin, and come to eternal life with God.
- A love which demonstrates the nature of what love truly is and truly does... because He IS love.
- It is the nature of love to give of itself...and God created Man out of His munificence...in order to bestow upon others the sheer gratuitous and unlimited love.
- And during this Paschal season, He grants us a glimpse of the ocean of love He has for us...
- ...not only going to His death upon the cross to satisfy justice in redeeming us from our sins, but to subdue death...to open up the gates to eternal life which He does in His resurrection as the “first-born from the dead.”
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- We say in our creed that after His death that He descended to the dead.

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- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the righteous prior to Jesus were held in waiting prior to the Resurrection, because Jesus had not yet open those Heavenly gates.
- The Catechism tells us: *“It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham’s bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when He descended into hell.”* (CCC 633)
- ...for, as we read in 1 Peter: *“...this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.”* (1 Peter 4:5-6)
- And as we read from an ancient Easter homily, Jesus comes to them with words such as these: *“I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prison in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.”* (CCC 635)
- But now...Heaven is open to all who seek Him...all who seek to follow Him. As we read in John’s Gospel: *“...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...”* (John 1:12)
- This is why tonight we especially rejoice in our catechumens coming forward for baptism...and our baptized candidates coming forth to ask full communion in our Catholic faith.
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- St. John writes: *“Jesus Christ [is] the first-born of the dead...”* and as St. Peter says of the faithful: *“...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* (1 Peter 2:9)
- So, truly, *“hallelujah”!*...for in the Resurrection there is only sweetness itself. There is no sorrow; only the joy of the empty tomb...a mother reunited with her only Son whom she saw die upon the cross...the Risen Christ...who opens the doors not only for eternal existence, but for eternal life and happiness.
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- *“One thing have I asked of the LORD, this I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD... (Psalm 27:4)... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” (Psalm 23:6-1)*