

EASTER IS OUR DAY

WORSHIP READINGS AND PRAYERS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHURCHES

PRAYERS FOR THE CYCLE OF LIFE
Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, & Pentecost Sunday

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A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

This morning, as I write these words, the sun is shining on the hill outside my home.

Each morning I see that splash of sunshine slowly overtake my lawn, I take a few moments to drink it in.

I may not live here forever. The sun may not shine tomorrow. But today, because it is shining, my heart is encouraged.

Prayers, like that sunshine spilling on my lawn each day, can encourage the heart. And part of my life's work is to write prayers that help individuals and congregations find encouragement and hope in the season in which they find themselves.

The following readings are intended for use in worship throughout the Easter Season. Beginning with Palm Sunday and moving through Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Pentecost, each reading is a meditation on a Scripture pertinent to that day.

AS THE YEAR 2020 UNFOLDS

As the year 2020 unfolds, Easter sits like a star near its beginning, reminding us that the tensions and anxieties of an age must always bow to the Risen Christ who is leading history. The laughter of children in a home, the kind welcome of friends, the joy of good food and days where time seems to slip away, all speak of the many gifts of God that are illumined at Easter.

But perhaps no gift shines so bright in our lives as the powers of forgiveness and compassion that weave through the narratives we read at this time of year. Because of what happened in real space and real time by six o'clock on an ancient Friday night, the night on which Jesus breathed His last breath before Easter Sunday, a way of understanding life and how it is designed to be lived in its fullness had now entered on he scene of human thought.

"'Forgiveness of sins,' for the first disciples, was now to be seen as a fact about the way the world was, a fact rooted in the one-off accomplishment of Jesus' death, then revealed in his resurrection, and then put to work through the Spirit in the transformed lives of his followers" (N.T. Wright, The Day The Revolution Began, p. 157).

In other words, forgiveness of sins, and then forgiveness as a way of life, was now an option for any given person. We could become the kind of person Jesus was, and is – a cruciform person, one who does not yield to bitterness or self-formed desire even when our deepest self has been violated.

No, we yield to Christ, to becoming forgiveness itself, in the face of our enemies. And that power to forgive, resonating with Jesus' words on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34) is a power now given to us by the transferring movement of the Holy Spirit.

HOW WORSHIP PUTS TRUTHS IN OUR HEARTS

So how can the Resurrection story, from Palm Sunday's party-at-the-gates, to Easter Sunday's launch of the Church, move us in our every day lives?

Well, for one thing, Easter was never intended to be a one time event in history. Yes, the Lord Jesus rose "once, for all" (Romans 6:10), but there is an ongoing reverberation of spiritual life that flows from those earliest days when the faith was born into the world, and began rolling toward the here-and-now days of your life and mine. Every Sunday is to be a mini-Easter of worship, as it was for the early Church. And it is the continued celebration of the truths of Easter in spoken word, and song, and prayer, and image that settles them deep into our spirit as we move in the world as a forgiving and freeing people.

Into each of our days, through worship, this story can speak. And if you lead us in worship, you are doing a high and mighty service for us all.

HOW TO USE THESE READINGS

Palm Sunday reminds us that we are People Who Welcome, who open gates and celebrate when God's good news is at the door.

Good Friday reminds us that we are People of Surrender, at our very least, in this world.

Easter Sunday reminds us that we are People of the Resurrection, who, when asked where we place our hope, raise our heads and answer, "In Jesus, the risen Lord of Heaven and Earth."

May each of these readings draw you and your congregation into a deeper posture of worship as you use them this season. They are intended to be short tools of worship, woven easily in between songs and providing a pause for reflection and prayer within the flow of your set.

Each responsive reading is provided with an opening Scripture (from the NIV) for reference. The passage is not intended to be read at the opening of the reading, but can be if it seems fitting.

Please feel free to modify these prayers for your own use and to your own taste. I always suggest that, no matter what modifications are made, the Scriptures "feel present" in the readings. This welcomes the mind of the worshipper to roam freely to other encouraging passages, even as these prayers are being prayed in worship.

HOW THEY FLOW
The flow is simple – the readings are intended to follow in tandem with one another week after week. Use on in the Palm Sunday service, the Good Friday prayer in the next, etc.

Palm Sunday's reading is intentionally short, and creates more space for celebration. The subsequent readings on Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost linger as meditations on the rich content of the day in the midst of worship, and integrate easily with other Scriptures and additions from the set.

Easter Is Our Day! Easter is to be owned by all who embrace the legacy of Hope that simultaneously belongs to us, our families, and to the world Jesus loves (John 3:16).

For that reason, I bless you, as a fellow worshipper and brother in Christ, to make these prayers your own.

Be the non-anxious presence walking through your home, your community, and your world this year. May these prayers help you, and your worshipping community, to do the same.

Sweeping Grace and Deepest Peace,

Dan
Easter 2020
Thompson's Station, TN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 A Word From The Author
5 Table Of Contents
6 Introduction To The Cycle Of Life

10 Scriptures & Readings

11 Palm Sunday Scripture, Matt. 21:1-11
12 **Your King Comes To You**

13 Good Friday Scripture, 2 Cor. 5:13-19
14 **High And Lifted Up**

17 Easter Sunday Scripture, Luke 24:1-9
18 **Easter Is Our Day**

19 Pentecost Sunday Scripture, Acts 2:1-4
20 The Nicene Creed
22 **The Lord, The Giver Of Life**

24 Additional Readings (Whispers Of New Creation Series)

INTRODUCTION TO THE CYCLE OF LIFE

The readings and prayers on the following pages are for what the Church calls "The Cycle of Life," particularly, the season that encompasses Lent, Good Friday through Easter Sunday, and Pentecost. It will help for me to explain how these seasons were formulated, and how they can help us order our lives, and daily living, around the Christ event.

Over the course of the first few centuries of the Church, various seasons, and particular Sundays (for the early church, every Sunday was a mini-Easter) began to take on a yearly meaning for celebration.

With the goal of remembering the whole of the Story of God's activity among humankind using a yearly calendar, a marking of dates began to occur that spawned literally hundreds of ways of giving meaning to seasons Sundays across Church history.

The Cycle of Light (the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) form the start of the Christian year. These seasons then flow into the Cycle of Life (the seasons of Lent, Easter, and Pentecost), guiding us through the second portion of the year.

Advent, the beginning of the Worship Year in the Christian calendar, is the start of our journey toward the celebration that is Christmas. As the Worship Year is a way that Christians have ordered their daily, weekly, and yearly spirituality around the Christ event, we see Christ's coming in the *adventus* (Advent means "the coming") as the launch of our year of worship.

To carry us forward into our time and reflection being organized around Jesus and what He has done, we observe the Cycle of Light with a season of anticipation, a season of celebration, and a season of proclamation.

Advent is all about anticipation of Christ's coming, Christmas is all about celebration of Christ's coming, and the Epiphany leads us into a time of proclamation that God works in and among us as a human family.

We then come around in the year to observing the Cycle of Life, which is Lent (anticipation), Easter (celebration), and Pentecost/After Pentecost (proclamation).

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

The Christian year is one way that Christians have, for millennia, revisited the life of Christ and the acts of the Church on a yearly basis. The Christian year officially begins with Advent, and ends with the celebration of the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost. Let's just say a few words about the meanings and stories focused on during each of these seasons of the Christian year.

To understand the place of Pentecost in the Church Year, we must first remember the place of Easter, which precedes it. Pentecost is the culminating celebration of the resurrection season of Easter.

Let's just say a few words about the meanings and stories focused on during each of these seasons of the Worship year.

Advent
Advent is celebrated over the four Sundays before Christmas day and is a season of anticipation reenacting the Jews long wait for a Messiah. The tune, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is an advent hymn, meant to create this anticipation for the celebration of Christmas. Advent means "the Coming," and anticipates the Christ event (incarnation) by calling us to long for the coming of the One as the Jews did throughout history.

Christmas (Dec. 25th–Jan. 5th)
Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation—that God does not remain distant from the creation He loves, but rather acts in time, space, and matter to rescue, restore, heal, and deliver us from the broken nature of the world in which we live. Christmas is meant to be a celebration of God's intervention, and by focusing on the Incarnation, a remembering that God is a God who deals in the media of human hearts as He creates His great work of redemptive art.

Epiphany (Jan. 6th)
Epiphany is a celebration of Jesus' manifestation to the world as Savior. The journey of the magi is often a focal point of epiphany, as is Jesus' baptism. Epiphany speaks of the "unveiling" of Christ to the world, both to the Jews and beyond to the Gentiles.

***After Epiphany** (**after Jan. 6th–beginning of Lent**)*
Post-Epiphany is a time to celebrate Jesus revealing himself as the Son of God through signs and wonders in the world. It focuses on the saving deeds of Jesus, and the power of transformation that alters human beings spiritually and rehumanizes us in the way of Jesus.

***Lent** (**spring: begins Ash Wednesday six and a half weeks before Easter**)*
Lent is a season that spans from Ash Wednesday all the way through the Thursday of Holy Week, or the week that culminates in the first day of the week that is Easter Sunday. We move with Jesus through the crowds as he heals and delivers, and faces terrible opposition from those he loves. Lent is a season of personal evaluation, a time to mourn our brokenness and to seek to know ourselves as God knows us. We open ourselves to vulnerable prayer, confession, and action, welcoming God to right our hearts just as

He is righting the world toward the culmination of New Creation to come.

***The Great Triduum** (**Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Holy Week**)*
The Great Triduum represents the final days of the Lent season, often celebrated by fasting and prayer that lead us through to the ultimate act of love that is the crucifixion. On these days, we consider Jesus' choice to take the cup of the Father, to break the power of death, and to offer atonement for the sins of humankind.

On these days, we focus on the deep humanity of Jesus (the greatest stumbling block to the world throughout all of church history), our own dedication to him as Lord, and the curtain he is about to ultimately open between us and the Father in the story that will unfold into Easter.

Easter
Easter is the great day of triumph. It is the ultimate yearly Resurrection Celebration of the Church. It affirms the saving event of Christ in the world, breaking the chains of sin and death and inviting us into the new creation, resurrection life of the age to come.

Easter goes on for fifty days (approximately six total Sundays) and includes Ascension Day and the culminating joy of Pentecost. Easter is the central celebration of the Christian year and is the greatest storytelling Sunday of them all.

After Pentecost
Pentecost, rooted in the ancient Jewish celebration of the five (penta) books of the Law, is the birthday of the Church. A welcoming of the Holy Spirit is remembered, and the spread of the good news through a divinely empowered Church becomes the center of attention.

This season leads us with the theme of the Spirit's great inspiration through the remainder of the year, until Advent begins the cycle over again.

FOLLOWING THE WORSHIP YEAR

This quote from the late author and worship education Robert E. Webber will help us here:

"How does the church express the spirituality of being with Christ in his incarnation, manifestation to the world, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again? How can we as members of the church participate in a present spirituality that is rooted in past events and anticipates a future event? The answer to this question is that we are shaped and formed spiritually by Christ in the church through a worship that continually orders the pattern of our spirituality into a remembrance of God's saving deeds and the anticipation of the rule of God over all creation.

> ***"...The Christian year represents the historical unfolding of the life of Christ and his sure return. One may observe that Advent deals with the coming of Christ; Christmas, his birth; Epiphany, his manifestation to the Gentiles; Lent, his journey toward death; the Great Triduum, the last days of Jesus' earthly life; Easter, the time to celebrate his resurrection; and Pentecost, the time to experience life in the power of the Holy Spirit. According to this historical representation of the life of Christ, the Christian year begins with Advent and ends with Pentecost."***

(From Robert Webber's, Ancient-Future Time, p. 31)

When we follow the worship year in our worship practices and our rituals in home life, we are swept up into a grand celebration, every year, of what God has done for is in Christ. In a very real sense, we join the faithful across the ages in our celebration of worship, and we join the saints around the world putting Jesus as the very center of their focus and attention.

Use the Worship Year as a way to lead yourself into worship, and to lead others in your care. See it as a doorway through which you can daily, and weekly, orient yourself to Jesus' work in you and in the world, and to remember that you are loved and valued more than words can say.

SCRIPTURES & READINGS
(For Print)

PALM SUNDAY

OPENING SCRIPTURE

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Matthew 21:1-11

YOUR KING COMES TO YOU

For Palm Sunday

LEADER

See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

CONGREGATION

Hosanna, the King of Kings is coming: coming then, and coming now

LEADER

See, Your King comes to you, strong and ready to disarm your fears

CONGREGATION

Hosanna, the King of Kings is coming: coming then, and coming now

LEADER

See, Your King comes to you, words on fire, love restoring

CONGREGATION

Hosanna, the King of Kings is coming: coming then, and coming now

ALL

Lord of Hosts, we see You coming through these gates that worship opens.

In this time of joy, in our time of need, we sense the Easter story bursting through these anxious walls again.

Your coming means Your Presence, and Your Presence means Your Peace.
We receive Your Presence and Your Peace this Palm Sunday.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

OPENING SCRIPTURE

If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:13-19

HIGH AND LIFTED UP
(**For Good Friday**)

LEADER
The cross hangs high in the air above the hill called Golgotha

CONGREGATION
We see You, Lord Christ, high and lifted up

LEADER
The cross speaks of a love unfailing, and a gift ever giving

CONGREGATION
We see you, Lord Christ, high and lifted up

LEADER
The cross tells us that old things will pass away, but new things will spring up in their place

CONGREGATION
We see you, Lord Christ, high and lifted up

LEADER
The cross is our reminder, without fail, that to surrender to God is the way
to a life designed to be lived

CONGREGATION
We see you, Lord Christ, high and lifted up

ALL
Father and Reconciling God, there is no season of life in which the cross is irrelevant, or unnecessary, to our faith. The cross is, and will always be, a doorway to our reconciliation – us to You, and us to one another.

With the message of reconciliation forming deeply in our hearts, we lean into the world we know with the same surrender, the same giving, the same vision for
all relationships to be restored.

Your cross is Your glory, Lord, and our eyes are filled with that glory as we take our place as Your forgivers, Your reconcilers, Your peace-giving presences in this world.

Be our Peace, the one who has broken down every wall.

High and lifted up, be our Peace.

High and lifted up, be our Peace.

High and lifted up, be our Peace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

OPENING SCRIPTURE

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.

Luke 24:1-9

EASTER IS OUR DAY
(**For Resurrection Day**)

LEADER
Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

CONGREGATION
We are filled with joy and wonder!

LEADER
Hallelujah, Christ is risen!

CONGREGATION
We are struck by Light's bright rays!

LEADER
Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

CONGREGATION
We are filled with Heaven's songs!

LEADER
Hallelujah Christ is risen

CONGREGATION
We are in the company of angels and saints

LEADER
Christ our King, You have triumphed, and today we remember with delight

CONGREGATION
That you entered this life, humble and good, faithful to Your Father,
leaving miracles in Your path

LEADER
Christ our King, You have triumphed, and today we remember with delight

CONGREGATION
That you carried our sins to their resting place, and your cross burst forth
rom its resting ground into a tree of life

LEADER
Christ our King, You have triumphed, and today we remember with delight

CONGREGATION
That worship is our privilege,
and in times when hope seems distant,
and anxious thoughts fill our eyes,
your Resurrection brings Hope near

ALL
Father, Easter is Your day!

And now, Easter is our day to reclaim the truth of Your Word – that on the third day You rose again according to the Scriptures, and gave us the
Ever-renewing Promise that we are new creations.

As New Creation people, we fix our eyes on things above, not on earthly things. We train our eyes on that which will last forever – the Love of our Good God, who will be good no matter what our circumstances proclaim.

Raise us again from our fears, from our inner disquiet,
and from our false beliefs that bind us.

Make us Your Easter people, for the righting of Your world, and the
filling of all hearts with Resurrection Hope.

In Jesus Living Name, we come,

Amen.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

OPENING SCRIPTURE

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:1-4

THE NICENE CREED

I would encourage you, with this Pentecost reading, to read the Nicene Creed in preface.

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
The Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
Of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Son of God,
Eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
True God from true God,
Begotten, not made,
Of one Being with the Father;

Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven,
Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
And became truly human.

For our sake hH was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again
In accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
And is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
To judge the living and the dead,
And His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son
Is worshiped and glorified,
Who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.*
We acknowledge one baptism
For the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come.

Amen.

(*catholic means ″universal″ in this context)

THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE
(**For Pentecost Sunday**)

LEADER
The Holy Spirit is our Inheritance, the Lord, the Giver of Life

CONGREGATION
And we receive that Inheritance from You, our Father and our God!

LEADER
The Holy Spirit is the Bondage Breaker, and the Fear Crusher

CONGREGATION
The Holy Spirit is the New Way Maker and the Forger of Faith

LEADER
The Holy Spirit is the Freedom Giver, and the Breath of God

CONGREGATION
The Holy Spirit is the Seal of our Redemption and the Promise of Everlasting Life

LEADER
The Holy Spirit is with us, here and now

CONGREGATION
The Holy Spirit is in us, here and now

LEADER
The Holy Spirit is all around us, here and now

ALL

Lord, we as your people on this Day of Pentecost retrace our lineage to those in that Upper Room who said ″Yes″ to Spirit′s outpouring, in their hard times and their hard places.

We welcome Your mighty wind to sweep through this place to remove all fear, our anxiety, and all distortions of what we believe to be true.

Arrest our hearts with Resurrection's love, fill our hearts with Resurrection's trust, and rule and reign in our hearts with Pentecost fire as we move from here into Your world.

Make us reconcilers, make us holy, and make us the bearers of New Creation's message in the year ahead.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life.

Amen.

ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR WORSHIP

The above series of readings are intended to go together, flowing from and into one another for weekly use in this season.

The following additional readings have been offered in the same spirit, and were part of an earlier collection.

The readings following vary in type between responsive readings and prayers to be read aloud. While the prayers designed to be read aloud were written for one voice, perhaps accompanied by background music or unique lighting, they can be read by a congregation.,

Because they are more poetic in nature, just know that the congregation may find their way around them less easily.

Please us this for any additional services, or any purpose that serves the worship of your congregation.

Voice From The Darkness: Death

A Lenten & Good Friday Reading

There is Death.
Lack of Breath,
Lack of Blood,
Lack of Life.

Death can only be conquered by Life,
And that Life must be Life after Death.
That Life, then, must be a physical Life
To truly conquer a physical Death.

There is the Sting Of Death.

Lack of Hope,
Lack of Faith,
Lack of Health.

The Sting Of Death can only be healed by the Balm Of Life,
And that Balm of Life must be the Balm Of Life that redresses, must set right,
the Sting Of Death.

That Balm Of Life, then, must be a repairing agent,
To truly heal the Sting Of Death.

Into Death's dark cave,
And into the shadows of the Sting Of Death,
Many have moved, and
Many have succumbed.

One has stepped deep into Death's tomb,
Been enveloped in the wiry shadows of the Sting Of Death,
And in its hungry hall,
Has Spoken.

A Voice from the Darkness,
Not silenced, but full of Breath,
Nor hollow, but full of Blood,
Nor lifeless, but full of all manner of Life,

Now Speaks.

ABOUT THE LUCERNARE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

This reading you are about to read on the next page is for the Easter Vigil, or Lucernare, which many contemporary churches do not do as a service.

This particular rendition of a responsive prayer for use during this service is designed for all sets of the three "Alleluias" to be either spoken, or sung to the tune of the Alleluias in "All Creatures Of Our God And King." The three Alleluias at the very end are meant to be sung as well, unless the spoken word is preferred.

The reading is based on the symbolic service of the Lucernare, where a candle is brought into to a darkened room celebrating the Light that came into the world, and the Light of the resurrection.

References to 1 Corinthians 15 are part of the final declarations of the community. Here is on excerpt below:

> "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet."
>
> 1 Cor. 15:20-27a

As the candle is brought in from the back during the reading (we suggest by an older child or teenager), it is then placed at the front, in a central location, for visibility throughout the service.

Here is a brief synopsis of the Easter Vigil service from Wikipedia:

> "The Easter Vigil, also called the Paschal Vigil or the Great Vigil of Easter, is a service held in many Christian churches as the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus. Historically, it is during this service that people (especially children) are baptized and that adult catechumens are received into full communion with the Church. It is held in the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day — most commonly in the evening of Holy Saturday — but is considered to be the first celebration of Easter Day, since the Christian tradition considers feasts and other days of observance where Masses are celebrated to begin at sunset of the previous day.
>
> In the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, the Easter Vigil is the most important Mass of the liturgical year as well as the first celebration of the Eucharist during the fifty-day long celebration of Easter, and is marked by the first use since the beginning of Lent of the acclamatory word ″Alleluia″, a distinctive feature of the liturgy of the Easter season. ...Because

the new liturgical day begins at sunset, the vigil begins between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Sunday outside the church, where a fire is blessed by the celebrant.

This new fire symbolizes the radiance of the Risen Christ dispelling the darkness of sin and death. The Paschal candle is blessed and then lit. This Paschal candle will be used throughout the season of Easter, remaining in the sanctuary of the church or near the lectern, and throughout the coming year at baptisms and funerals, reminding all, that Christ is 'light and life.'

Once the candle has been lit there follows the ancient and dramatic rite of the Lucernarium, in which the candle is carried by a priest through the nave of the church, itself in complete darkness, stopping three times to chant an acclamation such as 'Christ our Light' or 'Light of Christ' (Lumen Christi), to which the assembly responds 'Thanks be to God' or 'Deo Gratias'."

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_vigil

Alleluia

The Easter Vigil (with Lucernare)

LEADER
Darkness, meet the Light Of The World.
No longer will your shadows blind our souls.

COMMUNITY
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia!

LEADER
Death, meet the Author Of Life.
No longer will your sting last in the heart of humankind.

COMMUNITY
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia!

LEADER
Fear, meet the Giver Of Hope.
No longer will your whispers speak louder than our joy.

COMMUNITY
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia!

LEADER
The Light has come into the world.

COMMUNITY
And the darkness has not overcome it.

LEADER
Death has been swallowed up in victory.

COMMUNITY
And we will never forget this truth!

LEADER

In Adam, all die; but in Christ, we will be made alive.

COMMUNITY

Resurrection Life is our everlasting inheritance, our living hope, and our great expectation.!

ALL

The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

″Death has been swallowed up in victory.” ″Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?″ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ the Lord is Risen Today. Resurrection Life is upon us. New Creation is here.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Amen.

Voice From The Darkness: Life

An Easter Reading

LEADER
There is Life.
The Presence of Breath, The Presence of Blood, The Presence of Life.

Life has conquered Death,
And that Life is Life after Death.

That Life is a physical Life, a Resurrection,
That truly has conquered a physical Death.

ALL
Life has come to Us; Life has conquered Death.
There is the Balm Of Life.

The Balm of Hope, The Balm of Faith, The Balm of Health.
The Balm of Life heals the Sting Of Death.

LEADER
And that Balm of Life redresses, sets right, and dissolves the Sting Of Death.
That Balm Of Life is a repairing agent,
And truly heals the Sting Of Death.

ALL
The Balm Of Life has come to Us;
The Balm Of Life has healed the Sting Of Death.

LEADER
Into Death's dark cave,
And into the shadows of the Sting Of Death,
Many have moved, and
Many have succumbed.

(pause in silence)

One has stepped deep into Death's tomb,
Been enveloped in the wiry shadows of the Sting Of Death,

And in its hungry hall,
Has Spoken.

ALL
No Voice has been heard from the Hall of Death before;
This Voice is Strong and Alive.

A Voice from the Darkness,
Now sings, strong and full of Breath,
Now shouts, loud and full of Blood,

Now rises, flesh and blood and full of all manner of Life,

Now Speaks Life to You, to Me, into Us, and into the World.

Whispers Of New Creation

An Easter Reading

We hear a voice, now sweet, now strong,
Now fading into days to come
Compelling us to listen.

It lingers in the fragrant flow'r
It solos in the songs of wind
Restraining us from movement.

It writhes and twists within our souls
And groans for freedom's everlife
To dance with new creation.

It whispers from an age ahead
It stirs our hopes and haunts our dreams
Inviting us to listen.

It speaks of death and hate and harm
Confronted by a love more firm
A life more everlasting.

It speaks of veils now torn in two
No separations yet to come
No walls to keep us distant.

It speaks of life beyond our times
It sings that we will live beyond
And wake to see perfection.

It speaks of peace between us all
It speaks of eden's garden walk
In everlasting union.

We hear a voice, now sweet, now strong,
Now fading into days to come

Compelling us to listen.

RUSHING WIND

A Pentecost Responsive Reading

LEADER

The coming of the Spirit marks the birth of God's Church.

COMMUNITY

We are filled, renewed and empowered by the Breath of God at work in us!

LEADER

The coming of the Spirit means that the Presence of Christ indwells us.

COMMUNITY

We are transformed, healed and born anew by the Life of God moving within us.

LEADER

The coming of the Spirit is revealed in a Church changing society with divine strength.

COMMUNITY

We are equipped, instructed and led to action by the
Mission of God that has taken ahold within us!

LEADER

We recognize, Lord, that without your Spirit we have no strength to bring lasting change.

COMMUNITY

To ourselves or to this world.!

LEADER

We recognize, Lord, that without your Spirit we have no capacity to convey hope.

COMMUNITY

To our families or to our neighbors around us!

LEADER

Because of Pentecost, we remember that you are our Comforter, Counselor and Advocate.

COMMUNITY
We turn our hearts to you, Holy Spirit, and recognize that you are God.!

LEADER
Baptised once in water, we welcome your transfiguring baptism of fire.

COMMUNITY
We lift our prayers aloud, asking for the same fire that compelled your Church in the beginning to compel us.!

ALL
We have begun this race by saying yes to Your call, Lord Christ. From this place of trust, we believe that you will complete the good work you have begun in Your Church.

This You will do by the ongoing work of Your Spirit, and we respond with joy to Your approach. We believe that You have commissioned us to act with You as healing agents in this world you so passionately love.

We believe that Your Church is built for speed and effectiveness – and we will follow where Your Spirit leads us. Let the rushing wind of your Spirit move through the temple of your Church, built of these living stones.

Rustle our spirits with Your call to love, refresh our souls with Your gift of love, and write on our hearts with Your law of love.

Amen.

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