



## Easter Vigil

### **Narrator:**

The Easter Vigil is an ancient solemn practice that is observed during the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Sunday. The setting is a dark room which represents the tomb of Christ. The faithful are gathered within the tomb mindful "that all of us were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death (Romans 6.3)" and that "we were buried with him through baptism into death (Romans 6.4)."

Each faithful member holds a candle which is our symbol of devotion towards our stricken saviour. The light from our candles reflects our inner faith in the resurrection. As we await the morning hours to celebrate the resurrection of our Saviour, let us recount biblical stories of creation, salvation, and eternal life deep within the tomb.

**Let us Pray (All):** You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave . . . (Ps 88. 6, 5a)

### **Reader 1:**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first



day. God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

**Let us Pray (All):** He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape (Lam. 3.6-7a);

**Reader 2:**

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

**Let us Pray (All):** You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave . . . (Ps 88. 6, 5a)



### **Reader 3:**

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

**Let us Pray (All):** He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape (Lam. 3.6-7a);

### **Reader 4:**

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.



They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

**Let us Pray (All):** You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave . . . (Ps 88. 6, 5a)

**Reader 5:**

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

**Let us Pray (All):** He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape (Lam. 3.6-7a);

**Reader 6:**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.



He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.<sup>1</sup>

**Let us Pray (All):** You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave . . . (Ps 88. 6, 5a)

### **Reader 7:**

(After Jesus died), Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.<sup>2</sup>

**Let us Pray (All):** He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape (Lam. 3.6-7a);

### **Reader 8:**

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was

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<sup>1</sup> John 1.1-13

<sup>2</sup> John 19.38-42



full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD."<sup>3</sup>

**Let us Pray (All):** You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave . . . (Ps 88. 6, 5a)

### **Reader 9:**

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.<sup>4</sup>

**Let us Pray (All):** He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape (Lam. 3.6-7a);

### **Reader 10:**

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<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 37.1-6

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6.3-7



Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.<sup>5</sup>

**Narrator:**

The ancient solemn service of Easter Vigils has always been closely associated with baptism as noted centuries ago by the ecclesiastical writer Tertullian in the year 200 AD. Let us join the many many voices of the past centuries who took baptismal vows by candlelight in the pre-Easter darkness by renewing common baptismal vows together.

We believe in God the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth;

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour;

We believe in the Holy Spirit the giver of life;

We will love the Lord our God with our whole heart and soul;

We will love our neighbors as our self;

We will continue in the teaching and fellowship of the scriptures;  
and We will continue to proclaim by word and example  
the Good News of God in Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 4. 16-18



**Narrator:**

Let us go forth to our homes and await the morning hours with our love ones to celebrate the resurrection of our Saviour.

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(Please note that the ancient service of Easter Vigil usually ends with a celebratory recognition that Christ has risen by ringing bells and singing songs even though it is still hours before the resurrection).

(copies of the Easter Vigil can be obtained on [www.urban-monk.org](http://www.urban-monk.org))