

Saturday April 19, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

Symbols at the Easter Vigil

The Church uses signs and symbols in her liturgy to speak to believers on a profound level (without words), to speak directly to the heart. Liturgy uses symbols and signs (of which music is perhaps the most effective) to inculcate a mystery into our very being. The Great Easter Vigil, the "Queen of Vigils," is the pre-eminent celebration of the entire Christian year.

New Fire

The symbol here is a strong fire, a primal force that signifies purging, zeal, power and awe. The prayer here beseeches:

Make this new *fire* holy, and *inflame* us with new hope. *Purify* our minds by this Easter celebration and bring us one day to the feast of eternal *light*.

Paschal Candle

Of course the primary visual symbol at the Easter Vigil is the Paschal candle, the symbol of Christ himself, risen triumphantly from the dead, shining as the True Light to the nations. A cross is incised into the candle wax with a stylus, marking this pillar of victory with the sign of the gruesome instrument of death's hollow threat. Above and below the cross are marked an Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the quadrants defined by the cross are marked the four numerals of the current year. In Christ's journey from eternity to eternity, we are privileged each year to rejoice again at his supreme miracle of redemption and resurrection. Finally, five grains of incense are inserted at the center and arms of the inscribed cross and held in place by wax nails, honoring Christ's five wounds. Sacrifice and pain is a reality, even in glory. May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

Incense

The smoke from incense is used here, generated from the charcoal lit by the new fire. The burning of incense signifies zeal and fervor, its sweet fragrance represents virtue, and the rising smoke symbolizes our prayer, acceptable in the sight of God. The prayer accompanying this ritual was formerly said in Latin:

Incensum istud a te benedictum ascendat ad te Domine et descendat super nos misericordia tua.

May this incense, blessed by you, ascend in your sight, O Lord, and may your mercy descend upon us.

LIGHTING OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE & VIGIL MASS

The first Mass of Easter is a reverent vigil as we wait in anticipation for our Lord's Resurrection, and His victory over death.

THE PREPARATION AND LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE
BCP pg. 253-255

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Ex.14:10 - 15:1

Canticle: The Songs of Moses page 49

Refrain: I will sing to the Lord for his glorious triumph

Prayer: page 258

Second Reading: Isaiah 54:5 - 14

Psalm 30 page 502

Refrain: You have brought me up, O Lord, from the dead

Prayer page 259

Third Reading: Ezekiel 36: 24 - 28

Psalm 42 page 521

Refrain: As the deer longs for the water brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.

Prayer

Gloria In Excelsis (Bells may be rung) page 102

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY page 262

The Epistle: Romans 6:3-11

Psalm 114 page 621

Refrain: Hallelujah! The earth trembled at the presence of the Lord.

Gradual Hymn: 171 Good Christian men rejoice and sing

Gospel: Matthew 28: 1 - 10

Homily

Pause for silent reflection