

Great Easter Vigil

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18, 8:6-18, 9:8-13

Psalm 46

Exodus 14:10-31, 15:20-21

Canticle 8

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Psalm 98

Romans 6:3-11

Psalm 114

Mark 16:1-8

Our service this evening began outside as we lit the new light. We then processed in with the chant, "The Light of Christ." That was followed by the ancient chant, The Exsultet, a song in praise of the Pascal Light. It is more than a coincidence this first service of the Easter season is wrapped up in the celebration of light.

The obvious reason is that Jesus is the light of the world. His life and ministry was all about bringing the light of God's Word into a world of darkness and sin. But, is there more to it than this?

Ideally, this service begins in the dark, after sunset of Saturday evening - at the beginning of the new day in the Jewish tradition. The New Light of the fire is symbolic of the light that is generated in the Resurrection of Jesus. While there is no account of the actual resurrection recorded in any of the Gospels, we can imagine a momentous occasion as the stone is rolled away and Jesus steps out. In my mind, Jesus is surrounded by a brilliant light, a blinding light radiating from Him, not unlike the radiance the three disciples saw at the Transfiguration. This is the true Light of Christ that our Pascal Candle symbolizes.

In the beginning of John's Gospel, we read, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." The Light of Christ.

Whenever we try to not think about something negative, all we end up doing is focusing on that negative and it increases. Just try to stop thinking about something - all you will think about is that. In the same way, darkness tries to overcome light, but it can't. Bring a light into a dark room and it becomes light. That is what happened to the world when Jesus came into it. As John says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

Thus, on this sacred evening, as we celebrate that first light of the Resurrection, we celebrate the light that Jesus brought into the world, to bring the light of salvation to all. Let us rejoice in that Light.