



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
April 20, 2019 At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

Reading I Genesis 1:1-2:2

Psalm 104:1-35

Reading II Genesis 2:1-18

Psalm 16:1-11

Reading III Exodus 14:15-15:1

Psalm: Exodus 15:1-18

Reading IV: Isaiah 54:5-14

Psalm: 30:4-13

Reading V: Isaiah 55:1-11

Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

Reading VI: Barack 3:9-15, 4:4

Psalm: 19:8-11

Reading VII: Ezekiel: 36:16-28

Psalm: 42:2-3-5, 43:3-4

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11

Gospel Luke 24:1-12

Homily

Were are a little over an hour and I think we are doing pretty well. It is wonderful to gather on this holiest of nights. It flies by, this incredible celebration of the resurrection of our Savior. This is the way we begin. In the year 2008, in February, I was in Jerusalem. I had to get up at 4:30 AM. The taxi took two other priests and myself to the old city of Jerusalem and we got there and we walked through the old city in darkness, not much going on, to the church of the Holy Sepulcher. We entered the church, and at 6 AM the three of us co-celebrated Mass in the tomb of the Lord. It was incredible. Even though it was Lent, we wore white vestments and celebrated the Mass of Easter Sunday. In the Holy Sepulcher, every day is Easter. Jesus is not there. He is risen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

We celebrate that tonight in the context of salvation history. We listened to the beautiful reading of creation, God's amazing plan for us and how he brought all creation into being. Each day saw that it was good. On the sixth day after the creation of humans, God saw that it was very good and the completion with the Sabbath rest that has been set for us.

And the encounters with God: Abraham and his great faith, challenged to sacrifice his only son. Dramatic, wasn't it. You can almost see Abraham with the knife held above Isaac. Thank God Abraham heard the voice of the angel and Isaac was spared. What willingness of Abraham to give everything, even to sacrifice his only son, his beloved son. God's sacrifice is not spared as the Father does sacrifice his only son for us.

The invitation to come to the water in Isaiah. "Seek the Lord wherever he can be found." God invites us through our baptism to be close to Him. We will bless the waters of baptism tonight, and you will be invited to come to the water. Ezekiel promises us that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit replacing our stony hearts. We need that but we can replace it with love. And St. Paul reminds us that in order to rise with Christ, we have to die with him. Incredible readings.

And then the empty tomb. Incredible. They were wondering where the stone was. It was gone. There was a man in white who said, "He has been raised from the dead. He is not here. Go and tell people the good news. He is alive." It is incredible to walk through this as we do each and every year. Our world needs this good news of salvation and I hope it touches your heart as much as it has mine to realize the great love that God has for us. Incredible to share in this, and there is much more to go tonight.

There is a group that wants to join us and be part of our church, our family. They have completed their initiation and processed their faith in the Catholic Church. What a wonderful example this is for us. Rachel, baptized in the faith and now completing her initiation and completing the Eucharist. All three of them saying "yes," they want to follow Christ more fully and to be here with us. Inspiring, isn't it? To complete their instruction tonight. We feel their joy and we are so thankful for all of them.

There is still a little sadness for me tonight. This is the first year since I have been a priest that I have not had a baptism at the Easter Vigil. It is a little different, but I am not that sad because I look on it as a challenge from God. But we have these three wonderful ones this year, and I am going to pray that we have seven next year, including a couple of baptisms—will you pray for me in that way? God has answered prayers before. We want more people to be with us, inviting us to share what we know. And we can pray about that. So think about people you may know who would like to be part of our faith, and part of our church. Some people have never received the waters of baptism. We will pray for that.

I have mentioned in many of my homilies this year that there is so much sadness, so much negative news. People shouting and yelling and complaining at each other. We need to be different. We need to allow this message of Jesus Christ to fill us with his love, his peace, his joy. My hope is that people will say to me, and all of us, why are you different? Why are you not like everyone else out there in the world? The answer is: Because I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. And, according to his teachings, I want to share the love that I have received. That is the good news. Our world needs the good news. There are signs of it. I see them every day. So hopefully we can be signs of the good news in Quincy, Illinois, where the people are being counted.

Let's begin tonight, today, and let us allow the word of God to be alive in our hearts. Let's allow the Eucharist, which we will receive, to strengthen us and fill us with God's grace so we can become more like Christ. This is good news. Let's allow this Easter to fill our hearts with joy.

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