

[Genesis 1:1-2:2; Psalm 104; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18; Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-6; Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10]

Our beautiful Easter Vigil is always a feast for the senses.

We SEE the light of the Christ Candle, the Easter Candle, and the Paschal Candle penetrating the darkness of the night, the darkness of sin and the darkness of death. We SEE the sanctuary decorations move from the starkness of Lenten desert to the life of a lush garden.

We HEAR the wonderful Exultet and the vivid Bible accounts of salvation history. We HEAR the bells, the Gloria, the Alleluias.

We SMELL the incense and the Holy Chrism of those who are to be confirmed tonight.

We FEEL the water poured over us or sprinkled upon us as a reminder of our participation in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Finally, we TASTE what once was bread and wine and is now the very and true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. Our ritual prayer is very sensual, earthy.

All of our sensory experiences of this most holy night remind us that we are a people, a church, of hope. Because we know that Christ has defeated sin and death, we believe that His victory has meaning and purpose for us.

Christ is truly Risen! For you. For me. For all of humanity. In one sense, we climb the mountain of the Lord and are transformed -- transfigured -- by what we do here tonight. Perhaps that's why churches were built so beautifully decades and centuries ago -- to remind us that here we enter a church, we walk on holy ground, and that here is the only place where we will ever be the closest to God this side of Heaven. When we come to the table of the Lord.

My friends, Easter reminds us that we should not only take all of these images IN, we should also take them OUT. "Come and see," yes, then "Go and tell!" We do this somewhat fearful, but also overjoyed! For that is what we celebrate tonight. That Christ is Risen and has given us a Spirit-guided Church as His farewell gift to us. This community is truly Spirit-fed and Spirit-led!

Whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, our task here is only half-done. What we profess HERE is now to be taken out THERE. You and I, nourished by Word and Sacrament, become living tabernacles and walking icons of the reality that Jesus Christ is alive and well and working in our hearts, in our lives and in the homes and the cities of those who believe in Him. When we step out of church, we step into ministry.

And now, a word to our three elect and five candidates for ongoing conversion. Did you think that one day, you would be here about to do what you are about to do? What was the reaction of your family, your friends, and your co-workers when you told them that you are going to become a full-fledged Roman Catholic? An answer to prayers? Half-overjoyed and half-fearful?

What did Isaiah say in our Reading tonight? “My thoughts are not your thoughts nor are My ways your ways.” For most of us, our journey of faith is not a straight line from Point A to Point B but has a lot of zigzags in it, right? And we take comfort in the words that, as the rain does not return to the clouds until it has fulfilled its purpose, so His Word will not return to Him until it has accomplished what God wants to accomplish in you.

Be open to His Word. Be open to His Will.

And for all of us, may the love our Lord showed for the world at Easter bring His joy to your heart, His peace to your spirit and His holy light to your life.  
ALLELUIA! AMEN!