

## **EASTER VIGIL, 2020**

Greetings to you on this night as we watch and wait. Good Friday is gone and Easter is coming. But for now we wait. To help us keep watch we will be remembering how God has worked to bring us to this point. We will remember the creation. The sacrifice of Isaac and the deliverance from Egypt. We will start - just start - just take a peek at what is come.

We worship in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

It is Saturday evening. These are the hours when the disciples stand speechless in pain at the death of Jesus. What words can be spoken at such a moment? The disciples keep silent in the awareness of their own reactions during those crucial hours in the Lord's life. Before the injustice that condemned their Master, His disciples were silent. Before the lies and accusations and the false testimony that their Master endured, His disciples said nothing. During the trying, painful hours of the Passion, His disciples were unwilling to put their lives on the line to speak out on behalf of their Master. None of them did. What is more, not only did they not acknowledge Him: they hid, they escaped, and they kept silent. This is the silent night of the disciples who remained numb, paralyzed and uncertain of what to do amid this painful and disheartening situation. Gone was their hope. Their despair knew no bounds.

But victory was just around the corner. Amid the silence, the overpowering silence, the stones began to cry out. Clearing the way for the greatest message that history has ever heard: "He is not here, He has risen!" During that night the stone before the tomb would cry out and proclaim the opening of a new way for all of us. Creation itself will be the first to echo the triumph of life over all that had attempted to silence and stifle the joy of the Gospel. The stone before the tomb will soon leap up and in its own way intone a song of praise and wonder, of joy and hope, in which all of us are invited to join. But for now. He is in the grave and we watch and we pray and we prepare for the coming day.

### **Genesis 1, selected verses: *The Story of Creation***

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good.

## **THE RESPONSIVE PSALM: *A portion of Psalm 104***

Bless the LORD, O my soul!  
O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!  
You are clothed with majesty and glory,  
robed in light as with a cloak.  
You fixed the earth upon its foundation,  
not to be moved forever.

## **Genesis 22, selected verses: *The Sacrifice of Isaac***

God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a on a height that I will point out to you." When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Here I am," he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a sacrifice in place of his son. Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, & in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing, all this because you obeyed my command.

## **THE RESPONSIVE PSALM: *Portions of Psalm 116***

O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,  
you it is who hold fast my lot.  
I set the LORD ever before me;  
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

Therefore, my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,  
my body, too, abides in confidence;  
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,  
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

You will show me the path to life,  
fullness of joys in your presence,  
the delights at your right hand forever.  
You are my inheritance, O Lord.

## **Exodus 14-15, selected verses: *The Freedom from Slavery***

I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;  
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
He is my God, I praise him;  
the God of my father, I extol him.

The LORD is a warrior,  
LORD is his name!  
Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea;  
the elite of his officers were submerged in the Red Sea.

The flood waters covered them,  
they sank into the depths like a stone.  
Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in power,  
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the enemy.

You brought in the people you redeemed  
and planted them on the mountain of your inheritance  
the place where you made your seat, O LORD,  
the sanctuary, LORD, which your hands established.  
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

## **Isaiah 55:1-11: *God's Invitation***

Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread, your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David. As I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of nations, so shall you summon a nation you knew not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you, because of the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you. Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

## **THE RESPONSE: *Isaiah 12, selected verses***

God indeed is my savior;  
I am confident and unafraid.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
With joy you will draw water  
at the fountain of salvation.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;  
among the nations make known his deeds,  
proclaim how exalted is his name.  
You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;  
let this be known throughout all the earth.  
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,  
for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel!

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: *Romans 6:3-11***

Brothers and sisters: Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

## **THE RESPONSIVE PSALM: *Portions of Psalm 118***

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his mercy endures forever.  
Let the house of Israel say,  
"His mercy endures forever."  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;  
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.  
I shall not die, but live,  
and declare the works of the LORD.

The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.  
By the LORD has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.