

Easter Vigil
Saturday March 31, 2018

The first words of God spoken over creation were, **“Let there be light.”** As the people of Israel were crossing the Red Sea from slavery to freedom; God gave them **the column of the fiery cloud** to lead them through the darkness into the dawn of a new day. **“Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint Jesus; very early when the sun had risen.”** These events in Scripture radiate **light**. Our vigil tonight began with the blessing of the new Easter Fire which symbolizes the dispelling of the darkness, and giving us **light** to see the glory of God. We see the glory of God in the events of salvation history that have unfolded in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. The Pascal Candle that was lit tonight and carried in procession is our symbol that **Christ is the light of the world**, as the words were sung, **“The Light of Christ.” (Lumen Christi)**. This teaches us that the light of Christ shines brightly and that the darkness of this world can never overcome the light of Christ. The light of Christ shines brightly forever. And so the Pascal candle has a place of prominence in the sanctuary during the Easter Season.

Water is also, significant in the beginning of creation, and salvation history; **“as the water was gathered into a single basin.”** And, the **parting of the Red Sea**, allowing the people of Israel to **march into the midst of the sea on dry land with the water like a wall to their right and to the left.**

These images foreshadow the holy sacrament of baptism. St. Paul teaches us about the meaning of baptism when he says, **“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 St. Paul baptism gives us a sharing in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a command of Jesus Christ when He gives the great commission, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** And behold I am with you always until the end of the age.”

Baptism only makes sense in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as St. Mark recounts for us. When the women came to the tomb **very early when the sun had risen**, they found that the **stone had been rolled back**. More amazing is; that **they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed with a white robe**. This white robe symbolizes that he is full of faith. Think back to Mark’s Gospel on Palm Sunday, when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane; **a young man followed Jesus wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body; was seized but he left the cloth and ran off naked**. This young man was afraid and lacked faith.

Here is an image of baptism where we are stripped of the old self of slavery to sin and have put on the white robe of baptism, giving us freedom in Christ. Therefore, fear and the lack of faith have been conquered. The preface for the Eucharistic Prayer tonight reminds us of Jesus' resurrection and pointing us to our baptism with these words, **“For He is the true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world; by dying He destroyed our death, by rising He restored our life.”**

Tonight we are filled with Easter Joy as 7 people are coming to Christ and His Church in Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist. 5 people who are already baptized in another faith tradition will make a profession of faith and receive Confirmation and First Eucharist. 4 people who are already baptized in the Catholic faith will receive the sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist. In the season of Lent we journeyed with our brothers and sisters to this pinnacle of faith. This is not the end of the journey for them or for us. Rather, we continue this journey of faith together in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Confirmation is the Sacrament that gives us the fullness of the Holy Spirit and completes holy baptism. The Holy Eucharist that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper is His Body Blood Soul and Divinity under the appearance of bread and wine. Jesus said, **“behold I am with you always until the end of the age.”** Jesus chose to remain with us by giving of Himself completely in the Holy Eucharist.

Our dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we welcome you into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are overjoyed to share faith in Jesus with all of you. All of us together have experienced the Light of Christ, we have died and risen with Christ in baptism and have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and we share in the Holy Eucharist together. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless all of us in our journey of faith, And, on behalf of Archbishop Schnurr, Bishop Binzer, the faculty and staff of St. Antonius, may all of you have a Blessed Easter Season in Christ.