

Holy Week 2014: Holy Saturday Vigil

Holy Saturday Vigil Background

Traditionally the Holy Saturday vigil lasted through the night until dawn of Easter and the 40-day fast is broken with communion. The vigil provided space to mourn and reflect on the day that Christ's body lay in the tomb.

Instructions

The theme of this vigil is a "seed buried in the ground". Our reflection is on how Christ lay in the earth on this dark night before the dawn of resurrection. Approach these readings and prayers as we do with the fixed hour prayer. Allow for a time of silence and reflection in between each of the prayers and readings.

- Light a candle or fire in an urn or fire pit (incense is another option)
- Take turns reading through each section (prayer or scripture) and allow silence in between each section to meditate and reflect.

Greeting

On this most holy night
when our Savior Jesus Christ passed from death to life,
we gather with the church throughout the world
in vigil and prayer.

This is the passover of Jesus Christ:
Through light and the word,
through water and the bread and wine,
we recall Christ's death and resurrection,
we share Christ's triumph over sin and death,
and with invincible hope
we await Christ's coming again.

(-- Book of Common Worship --)

Prayer

Christ our Lord, like the seed buried in the ground, you brought forth for us the harvest of grace.

(-- Liturgy of the Hours --)

Mustard Seed

The One who was the God of eternal glory and majesty made himself as small as a grain of mustard seed when he became a little child, born of a virgin. When his body was delivered up for burial, he was sown in the ground; but after his glorious resurrection from the dead he grew up from the earth and became a tree, bearing branches in which the birds of the air could find shelter. This tree is the church, which through the death of Christ has risen in glory.

(-- Chromatius of Aquileia --)

Word of God

As we watch and wait, let us listen to the word of God, recalling God's saving acts throughout history and how, in the fullness of time, God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us - Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Jonah 1:10-2:10 (The Message)

Running Away from God

As Jonah talked, the sailors realized that he was running away from God. They said to him, "What are we going to do with you—to get rid of this storm?" By this time the sea was wild, totally out of control. Jonah said, "Throw me overboard, into the sea. Then the storm will stop. It's all my fault. I'm the cause of the storm. Get rid of me and you'll get rid of the storm." But no. The men tried rowing back to shore. They made no headway. The storm only got worse and worse, wild and raging.

Then they prayed to God, "O God! Don't let us drown because of this man's life, and don't blame us for his death. You are God. Do what you think is best." They took Jonah and threw him overboard. Immediately the sea was quieted down. The sailors were impressed, no longer terrified by the sea, but in awe of God. They worshiped God, offered a sacrifice, and made vows. Then God assigned a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and nights.

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At the Bottom of the Sea

Then Jonah prayed to his God from the belly of the fish.

He prayed:

"In trouble, deep trouble, I prayed to God. He answered me.
From the belly of the grave I cried, 'Help!' You heard my cry.

You threw me into ocean's depths, into a watery grave,
With ocean waves, ocean breakers crashing over me.

I said, 'I've been thrown away, thrown out, out of your sight.
I'll never again lay eyes on your Holy Temple.'

Ocean gripped me by the throat.

The ancient Abyss grabbed me and held tight.

My head was all tangled in seaweed at the bottom of the sea where the
mountains take root.

I was as far down as a body can go, and the gates were slamming shut
behind me forever—

Yet you pulled me up from that grave alive, O God, my God!

When my life was slipping away, I remembered God,

And my prayer got through to you,
made it all the way to your Holy Temple.

Those who worship hollow gods, god-frauds, walk away from their only
true love.

But I'm worshipping you, God, calling out in thanksgiving!

And I'll do what I promised I'd do! Salvation belongs to God!"

Then God spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on the seashore.

Prayer

In our hearts, O God, you have written a covenant of grace, sealed by
the obedience of Jesus your Son.

Raise us up with Christ,
the grain fallen to earth
that yields a harvest of everlasting life.
Bring us to glorify your name
by following faithfully where he has led.

We ask this through Christ, our deliverance and hope.

(-- *Roman Missal* --)

John 12:24

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit.

Night Readings

O night more light than day

more bright than the sun

O night more white than snow

more brilliant than many torches

O night of more delight than is paradise.

Night devoid of all dark

O night dispelling sleep

and teaching us the vigilance of angels

O night the demons tremble at

night of all nights in all the year desired.

Night of the church's bridal,

night of new birth in baptism,

night when the devil slept and was stripped,

night when the heir took the heiress

to enjoy their inheritance.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom
come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily
bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead
us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.