

Sunday 1st April, 2018
Year B - Easter Vigil with Baptismal Vows

Easter Vigil Readings (Genesis, Exodus, Ezekiel)
Romans 6:1-11
Matthew 28:1-10

In the name of the Trinity; Creator, Redeemer, and Life-Giver...

This Great Vigil of Easter is all about story. And we Christians are a people of story.

Today, we act out the story of the light of Christ coming into the world as we light the first fire of Easter and process the Paschal candle into the Church; the story of the light of Christ coming into a dark and hurting world. Our world.

We light all of the subsequent candles from the Christ candle - symbolic because for each of us, in ways small and large, our own story has been set afire by the story of Jesus Christ. We sit and ponder stories-- the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the stories of the people of God. Our stories. And this morning we will particularly remember how our Baptism set us apart, as we renew our Baptismal Vows.

We all have, of course, our own life stories, but this morning we proclaim that our life story is also a common one, shared with other children of God. We will renew our promises to God. We will be sprinkled with water. This morning we are reminded that we are, as our Baptismal liturgy proclaims, “marked as Christ’s own for ever.”

And on this most Holy morning all our stories are woven together as God’s people—past, present and future. We have made it through the 40 days of Lent and Holy Week. We have arrived at the threshold—Easter. Resurrection. New life.

Easter, however, is not about a one day event. Easter is about how we choose to live our lives. Easter is about living as transformed people of Christ. Easter is, if you will excuse the pun, about putting all our eggs into one basket, a basket called hope.

Easter is opening our eyes to resurrection moments that confront us every day. It is about asking the question, how do we live in this broken, battered world as Easter people?

The answer? It is with God's help. With God's love. A love made visible to us every single day when we love one another. Easter is our story, our way of life. Remember, friends! We are Easter people! We are Easter people.

Indeed. But this does not mean that we live protected sheltered happy go lucky lives. Like everyone else in the world our lives harbor edges, if not deep pools, of sadness and suffering. But what our life as Easter People does mean is that regardless of whether we live or die, we are God's beloved children—always.

Being Easter people means we live our lives knowing that life is stronger than death, that hope is always stronger than fear, and nothing is stronger than the love of God.

Being Easter People means, for example, that Coptic Christians, so brutally targeted by Islamic State terrorists in recent times, also celebrate the same mystery which we gather to explore this morning. Being Easter People means that even those who live with terrible burdens in their lives can say "Christ is risen", as we remember this most amazing story of God overcoming evil and death, in the resurrection we proclaim. That is our story.

And the story of God's people goes on.

We gather to remember an outspoken man, a man whose heart belonged to the poor and the suffering and those pushed to the edges of society. A man named Jesus who was crucified, assassinated, almost 2000 years ago.

But we also gather to proclaim that Jesus lives now. We say that Christ is risen in us so that we might live as Easter people. As people of hope and purpose and love. As people who can offer hope and purpose and love to others. We are Easter people. We are marked as Christ's own for ever.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

In the name of God. Amen