

The Easter Vigil & Easter Sunday: Family Practices to Celebrate

A note about these resources:

Families of all shapes and sizes are places of encounter with Christ. Each member of the family has a role to play to reflect Jesus' posture of prayer, forgiveness and love. This is the mission of the domestic church.

Perhaps your domestic church includes mom, dad and children...perhaps you are a single parent family or a foster family...perhaps you are empty nesters or seniors with grandchildren...perhaps you are single or widowed...perhaps you are engaged with hope for the future. All families are called to live

daily life as a Christian family or as Saint John Paul II said, "*Families, become what you are.*" Christ is present and active in our families at every moment today. Pope Francis writes, "the Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes" (*Amoris Laetitia*, #315).



Holy Week 2020 will be much different from any we have experienced in previous years. The specter of COVID-19 and the onslaught of grim news often makes us anxious and fearful. Yet in the midst of this darkness there is Jesus, who as we discovered in the 5th Sunday of Lent, weeps for us and gives us courage in the midst of our vulnerability to move the stone that traps us in the tomb.

These resources were prepared to help you and your family celebrate Holy Week 2020 as best you can. Some ideas may be exactly what you were looking for. Other ideas may be something new you might want to try. Other ideas may not be your cup of tea. Trust in your own discernment as to what is best for you and your family. If you need any additional assistance or have questions, please contact your pastor or the parish staff member who sent this to you. You can also contact John Gaffney, Diocesan Director for Evangelization & Catechesis, at jgaffney@dmdiocese.org with any questions. Please know of our prayers for you as we journey together into Holy Week 2020.

The Easter Vigil – We Await our Master's Return:

- Celebrate important elements of the Easter Vigil at home with your family:
 - A few details:
 - Although celebrated Holy Saturday evening, it is the dramatic Easter vigil liturgy that marks the beginning of Easter. We are awaiting our master's return with our lamps full and burning, so that he will find us awake and seat us at his table (cf. Luke 12:35ff). The Easter Vigil is divided into four parts:

- The Service of Light,
- Liturgy of the Word,
- Liturgy of Baptism, and
- Liturgy of the Eucharist.

- As we prepare to celebrate elements of this great Vigil at home, we will focus on the Liturgy of the Light and the Liturgy of the Word.



- As you celebrate with the Church while at home, consider who is gathered. We want to make sure that we are being mindful of the safety reasons behind physical distancing. You

can gather family digitally to participate if they can't be there in person. This prayer service is written in a way for larger families that are naturally gathered. Consider modifying it for your family: gathered in person or gathered digitally. Those who are elders in the family take the parent parts while those who are younger take the other parts. Most of all, make this celebration yours as we pray elements of the Easter Vigil together with our family of faith around the world.

- **The Service of Light** – consider using a large candle or a variety of candles in a decorative bowl such as pictured below.



- Although using the words of the Easter Vigil liturgy, your in-home experience is a reenactment of the sacred liturgy that takes place in Catholic Churches across the world.

- Consider beginning around 8:00 pm outside your home (if it is nice) and shutting off the inside lights.
- Start a fire in your fire pit, if you have one, or use a flashlight. Have a candle lighter available for later.
- While outside, one of the parents (elders) recite the following:

Christ yesterday and today
the Beginning and the End
the Alpha
and the Omega
All time belongs to him
and all the ages
To him be glory and power
through every age and for ever. Amen

- Have the other parent (elder) recite the following (or if only one parent/elder continue):
 - By his holy
and glorious wounds,
may Christ the Lord
guard us
and protect us. Amen.
- An older child, grandparent or one of the parents (elders) lights the candle (from the fire pit or use your candle lighter). reciting the following:
 - May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.
- Bring the candle in to the home stopping three times and have everyone recite the following while the person holding the candle elevates it.
 - Christ Our Light (our response is Thanks be to God)
- Place the candle on a table where the remainder of the in-home prayer service will take place.
- Those present take turns **praying the Exsultet** (Easter Proclamation).

Exult, let them exult,
the hosts of heaven,
exult, let Angel ministers of God exults,
let the trumpet of salvation
sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,
ablaze with light from her eternal King,
let all corners of the earth be glad,
knowing an end to gloom and darkness.
Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice,
arrayed with the lightning of his glory,
let this holy building shake with joy,
filled with the mighty voices of the peoples....



It is truly right and just,
with ardent love of mind and heart
and with devoted service of our voice,
to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,
and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.

Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal Father,
and, pouring out his own dear Blood,
wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.

These, then, are the feasts of Passover,
in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb,
whose Blood anoints the doorposts of believers.

This is the night,
when once you led our forebears, Israel's children,
from slavery in Egypt
and made them pass dry-shod through the Red Sea.

This is the night,
when once you led our forebears, Israel's children,
from slavery in Egypt
and made them pass dry-shod through the Red Sea.

This is the night
that with a pillar of fire
banished the darkness of sin.

This is the night
that even now, throughout the world,
sets Christian believers apart from worldly vices
and from the gloom of sin,
leading them to grace
and joining them to his holy ones.

This is the night
when Christ broke the prison-bars of death
and rose victorious from the underworld.

Our birth would have been no gain,
had we not been redeemed.
O wonder of your humble care for us!
O love, O charity beyond all telling,
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!

O truly necessary sin of Adam,
destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!

O happy fault
that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!

O truly blessed night,
worthy alone to know the time and hour
when Christ rose from the underworld!

This is the night
of which it is written:
The night shall be as bright as day,
dazzling is the night for me,
and full of gladness.

The sanctifying power of this night
dispels wickedness, washes faults away,
restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,
drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.

On this, your night of grace, O holy Father,
accept this candle, a solemn offering,
the work of bees and your servants' hands.
an evening sacrifice of praise,
this gift from your most holy Church.

But now we know the praises of this pillar,
which glowing fire ignites for God's honor,
a fire into many flames divided,
yet never dimmed by sharing of its light,
for it is fed by melting wax,
drawn out by mother bees
to build a torch so precious.

O truly blessed night,
when things of heaven are wed to those of earth,
and divine to the human.

Therefore, O Lord,
we pray you that this candle,
hallowed to the honor of your name,
may persevere undimmed,
to overcome the darkness of this night,
Receive it as a pleasing fragrance,
and let it mingle with the lights of heaven.
May this flame be found still burning
by the Morning Star:
the one Morning Star who never sets,
Christ your Son,
who, coming back from death's domain,

has shed his peaceful light on humanity,
and lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

- **Liturgy of the Word** – During the Easter Vigil, nine readings are provided: seven Old Testament and two New Testament. These readings help us to pray on the wonderful works of God for his people since the beginning of time. You will find a link to all the readings from the USCCB Website. The Gloria is sung before the reading of St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans and the Alleluia returns and is sung before the Gospel of Mark.
- *“One of the unique aspects of the Easter Vigil is the recounting of the outstanding deeds of the history of salvation. These deeds are related in seven readings from the Old Testament chosen from the law and the prophets and two readings from the New Testament, namely from the apostles and from the gospel. Thus, the Lord "beginning with Moses and all the prophets" (Lk 24.27, 44-45) meets us once again on our journey and, opening up our minds and hearts, prepares us to share in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup”* ([USCCB](#)).
- Consider having a different member of the family read the different scripture passages.
 - the story of creation, Gen 1:1-2; 2;
 - Abraham and Isaac, Gen 22:1-18;
 - Crossing of the Red Sea, Exodus 14:15–15:1;
 - Isaiah 54:5-14;
 - Isaiah 55:1-11;
 - Baruch 3:9-15.32–4:4;
 - Ezekiel 36:16-17.18-28;
 - Romans 6:3-11; and
 - Gospel reading Mark 16:1-7
- The Gloria
Glory, glory to God. Glory to God in the highest.
Glory, glory to God. And on earth, peace to people...people of goodwill.



We praise you, we bless you, we adore you... we glorify you.
We give you thanks for your great glory.

Lord God, heavenly King, God almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ only begotten son
Lord God, Lamb of God son of the father.

You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father...have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy one, you alone are the Lord.

You alone are the most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

- USCCB Link - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/041120.cfm>
 - It is up to you and your family if you want to include the responsorial psalms in between each reading.
- Close the prayer service by praying the Our Father.

Easter Sunday – We Rise with Christ:

- Celebrate the Liturgy of the Word with your family:
 - Easter is the feast of feasts, the joy and gladness of all Christians.
 - "This is the day which the Lord has made." Throughout the octave we shall sing of the unequalled joy which throws open eternity to us. Every Sunday will furnish a reminder of it, and from Sunday to Sunday, from year to year, the Easters of this earth will lead us to that blessed day on which Christ has promised that he will come again with glory to take us with him into the kingdom of his Father.
- Liturgy of the Word – Consider having a different member of the family read the different scripture passages.
 - Acts of the Apostles 10:34A, 37-43;
 - Responsorial Psalm, 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23;
 - Colosians Exodus 3:1-4 OR 1st Corinthians 5:6B-8;
 - Sequence;



- Alleluia;
- John 20:1-9
- USCCB Link to Readings - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/041220.cfm>
- Reflection Questions – (From [America Magazine](#)) – (Adult activity)
 - How can you show your gratitude for the resurrection?
 - How can you continue your positive Lenten practices throughout the year?
 - Where do you encounter Christ in your daily life?

Praying the Liturgy of the Hours during the Octave of Easter:

- While public celebrations of the mass have been suspended, as Catholics we still have the ability and invitation to participate in another liturgy of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours. This is a powerful prayer that can unite the whole Church in worship, and is a way to draw together during a time of physical distance.
- “The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office or the Work of God (Opus Dei), is the daily prayer of the Church, marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer. The Hours are a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ, using scripture and prayer... The Divine Office "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father"” ([USCCB](#)).
- For Sunday, April 12 & 19 - <https://www.keepthelordsday.com/>
- For weekdays during the Octave of Easter - <https://catholicexchange.com/divine-office>
- For an explanation of the Liturgy of the office - <https://thejesuitpost.org/2019/07/catholic-101-intro-to-the-liturgy-of-the-hours/>

