

**Liturgy and Prayers for Holy Saturday: At Home**  
Available in video format at from 8:30pm, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April at  
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## **Holy Saturday from St John the Baptist Church**

### *An Easter Vigil: From Darkness to Light*

with Rev Gareth Erlandson

#### **Our Opening Sentences**

##### ***The Vigil of Light***

Jesus has died and Jesus is buried.

Lord, where shall we go?

**Lord, where shall we go?**

Jesus is dead and hope is smothered.

Lord, where shall we go?

**Lord, where shall we go?**

Jesus has died and darkness triumphs.

Lord, where shall we go?

**Lord, where shall we go?**

Jesus has died but dawn is breaking.

Let us stay and watch and pray.

**For God is love.**

**Love hopes all things.**

**With God, all things can come to be;  
new life can come through Jesus.**

But Jesus has died and hope is buried.

But Jesus is dead and hope is smothered.

But Jesus has died and darkness triumphs.

But wait... and wait... and wait... and see.

**We shall wait and we shall see.**

*(David Coleman)*

Eternal God,  
you made this most holy night  
to shine with the brightness of your one true light:  
kindle within us the fire of your love,  
and bring us to the feast of eternal light;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Presenting the Candle***

Christ yesterday and today,  
the beginning and the end,  
Alpha and Omega,  
all time belongs to him,  
and all ages;  
to him be glory and power,  
through every age and for ever. **Amen.**

By his holy and glorious wounds  
may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us. **Amen.**

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,  
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. **Amen.**

**The Liturgy of the Word**  
(from [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com))

*As we hear each reading of scripture, more candles are lit*

**Isaiah 40:1-11 NIV**

*Comfort for God's People*

40 Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her

that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

3 A voice of one calling:

"In the wilderness prepare

the way for the Lord[a];  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.[b]  
4 Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.  
5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”  
6 A voice says, “Cry out.”  
And I said, “What shall I cry?”  
“All people are like grass,  
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.  
7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.  
Surely the people are grass.  
8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God endures forever.”  
9 You who bring good news to Zion,  
go up on a high mountain.  
You who bring good news to Jerusalem,[c]  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”  
10 See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.  
See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.  
11 He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.

The light of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Footnotes:**

[Isaiah 40:3](#) Or A voice of one calling in the wilderness: / “Prepare the way for the Lord

[Isaiah 40:3](#) Hebrew; Septuagint make straight the paths of our God

[Isaiah 40:9](#) Or Zion, bringer of good news, / go up on a high mountain. / Jerusalem, bringer of good news

## **Psalm 30 NIV**

*A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple.* [\[b\]](#) *Of David.*

- 1 I will exalt you, Lord,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- 2 Lord my God, I called to you for help,  
and you healed me.
- 3 You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;  
you spared me from going down to the pit.
- 4 Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;  
praise his holy name.
- 5 For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favour lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may stay for the night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- 6 When I felt secure, I said,  
“I will never be shaken.”
- 7 Lord, when you favoured me,  
you made my royal mountain [\[c\]](#) stand firm;  
but when you hid your face,  
I was dismayed.
- 8 To you, Lord, I called;  
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- 9 “What is gained if I am silenced,  
if I go down to the pit?  
Will the dust praise you?  
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
- 10 Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;  
Lord, be my help.”
- 11 You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,  
12 that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.  
Lord my God, I will praise you forever.

The light of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Footnotes:**

[Psalm 30:1](#) In Hebrew texts 30:1-12 is numbered 30:2-13.

[Psalm 30:1](#) Title: Or palace

[Psalm 30:7](#) That is, Mount Zion

## Matthew 28:1-10 NIV

### *Jesus Has Risen*

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The light of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The sanctuary lights are turned on and we sing the Easter Song of Praise together...*

**Sing, choirs of heaven! Let saints and angels sing!  
Around God's throne exult in harmony!  
Now Jesus Christ is risen from the grave!  
Salute your King in glorious symphony!**

**Sing, choirs of earth! Behold, your light has come!  
The glory of the Lord shines radiantly!  
Lift up your hearts, for Christ has conquered death!  
The night is past, the day of life is here!**

**Sing, Church of God! Exult with joy outpoured!  
The gospel trumpets tell of victory won!  
Your Saviour lives; he's with you evermore!  
Let all God's people sound the long Amen!**

## Reflection from Rev Gareth Erlandson

As we have visually encountered, the Easter Vigil is a very symbolic service in which we journey from darkness to light. Of course, the darkness and light are in one sense, literal. The disciples went to their beds under darkness, awoke and travelled back to the garden in the morning light. The tomb was sealed and the interior was dark on the Saturday evening; by Sunday morning it had burst open and light was allowed to stream in. Christ's body was encased in that darkness, only to roam freely in the light a few hours later.

But, the journey from darkness to light is also symbolic. Before lockdown, our reader, Ann Bronnert, and I had planned for this service to focus on the darkness and light that is sorrow and comfort, hence our reading from Isaiah. How much more appropriate does this theme seem a month on. All of us distanced from loved ones and cooped up in our own homes much more than we are used to. Many of us having to isolate completely. All of the anxiety that goes along with the spread of the virus and the alien conditions in which we find ourselves living. Some of us physically suffering as a result of the virus and some having lost dear loved ones over the last month. These are times of great sorrow and comfort is desperately needed.

God provides us with that comfort. As the final verses from our Isaiah passage reminded us, we are his sheep. He tends us, gathers us in his arms, carries us close to his heart and will gently lead us through every time of trial, including this one. And the resurrection story itself makes it clear that the tombs of our own homes will not incarcerate us for ever. We will emerge into the brightness of daylight in the future and Isaiah's reassurance of God's comfort whilst we wait for that day can be a great aid to our patience as we wait for that day. No matter how alone we may feel, if we remember we always have God's loving presence with us, we are never truly alone.

But the Isaiah passage encourages us to find comfort not only in God, but in each other. The prophet's opening words were God's instructions to him to comfort the people of Israel. We are called to do likewise in these times. Every time we pick up the phone, send an email or text, post a positive comment on social media, say a cheery hello to someone at a safe distance from our gardens or whilst out exercising, with each delivery we make to an isolated neighbour, we are offering that comfort to others; we are shining God's light into the darkness of our current situation.

The greatest symbol of the darkness and light though is what makes the Easter story so truly miraculous. And that is that through the resurrection, the darkness of death is overcome by the light of life.

There are of course many who will not emerge from the earthly tombs of their homes into the light of a new day – the daily statistics tragically attest to that. But the resurrection offers us the great promise of hope that those who die are able to enjoy the light of life everlasting in our Father's house. A place where there is no pain, no suffering but rather eternal joy and comfort.

And that means we have great cause to celebrate this Eastertide. It may be wildly different from what we are used to or what we had planned, but let us keep the feast nevertheless, because Christ is risen and we are risen with him.

*And now, let us commit our thoughts and meditations to God in prayer...*

**(Silence)**

God of unchangeable power and eternal light,  
look with mercy and favour on your Church,  
that wonderful and sacred mystery;  
by the effectual working of your providence,  
carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation;  
let the whole world see and know  
that things which were cast down are being raised up,  
and things which had grown old are being made new,  
and that all things are being brought to perfection  
by him through whom all things were made,  
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*(CinW 1984/1979 ECUSA modernised)*

After which, we sing the ancient hymn, Gloria in Excelsis, to a well-known Easter tune... (Thine be the glory)

**Glory to God! Our hearts to you we raise!  
Joy and peace on earth, in highest heaven praise!  
Songs of adoration, Lord, to you we bring,  
Praising your great goodness, Father, heav'nly King.  
*Glory to God! Our hearts to you we raise!  
Joy and peace on earth, in highest heaven praise!***

**Son of the Father, bearing this world's sin,  
Lamb of God, have mercy, grant us peace within.  
You, O Christ, are holy, you alone are Lord,  
With the Holy Spirit evermore adored.  
*Glory to God! Our hearts to you we raise!  
Joy and peace on earth, in highest heaven praise!***

## **The Liturgy of Renewal**

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ,  
we give thanks for the promise of Christ to be with us always.  
Christ with us  
in our birthing,  
our living,  
our dying.

Through our observance of Lent,  
we have reflected on God's gift of life.  
We now recall our baptism in Christ,  
giving thanks for the waters of birth,  
play,  
refreshment,  
cleansing,  
life-giving.

Mindful of our baptismal commitment  
to turn to Christ,  
to repent of our sins,  
to renounce evil,  
we recommit ourselves  
to do justly,

love mercy  
and walk humbly with our God.

**We turn to Christ  
in the love between us,  
the passion  
within us,  
the unexpected  
inspiring us,  
and the earth's embrace.**

**We repent of our solidarity in the sin of the world,  
Acknowledging that within us which wounds others.**

**We commit ourselves to  
working for change and healing  
in ourselves and the world.**

**We commit ourselves to wisdom in naming evil,  
Courage to expose it,  
and strength for putting liberation into action.**

God of life-giving water,  
we pray for all harmed by water exploitation, pollution, drought and flood:  
for all living in squalor, devastation and fear;  
for women and children who travel daily to carry water home;  
for those whose lives are risked on the seas;  
for all who depend on others for a cup of water;  
for all who work towards the justice of clean water for everyone.  
God of life-giving water,  
hear our prayer.

*(Elizabeth Baxter)*

## The Intercessions

The light of the risen Lord illuminates the darkness of our hearts and minds. On this holy night, let us turn to Christ our light, offering our prayer in his name for the Church and all people.

### ***Petitions***

For all who live in the dark shadow of war and violence:  
may the light of Christ dispel their fears and bring peace and reconciliation.  
God said, 'Let there be light': **And there was light.**

For all who live with the deep darkness of loneliness, pain, or suffering:  
may the light of Christ shine in their hearts and bring them comfort and healing.  
God said, 'Let there be light': **And there was light.**

For those whose darkness is the fear of death:  
may the light of Christ illuminate their hearts and raise their eyes to heaven and the hope to which we are called.  
God said, 'Let there be light': **And there was light.**

For those who have been raised to light through the waters of baptism:  
may the light of Christ be their constant guide and lead them in the way of goodness and mercy.  
God said, 'Let there be light': **And there was light.**

## Our Concluding Prayers

All powerful God,  
you raised Jesus from the darkness of death  
to the heights of heaven.  
May we who rejoice in his resurrection from the dead  
bring his light and peace to the world you created.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, evermore. Amen.**

*The Easter Fanfare is played*

