

Easter Vigil—Year C
Exodus 13:17-18, 20-22
The Gospel of Truth 4:1-8
Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21
Ezekiel 36:24-28
Ephesians 1:17-22
Romans 6:3-11
Psalm 114
Luke 24:1-12

This night has everything!

We **begin in darkness**; we **end in the light**.

We've hardly struck the match on the **new fire** before we find ourselves on the journey.

Deeply aware of having just come out from under **Pharaoh's heavy hand**, feeling slightly disoriented, we are given a **pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead us along the way**.

The **Gospel of Truth** would remind us that we have **lived in the darkness of forgetfulness**. What an incredible image. It's not that we are *inherently sinful* or *evil* or *depraved*, but we are *forgetful* of **who we really are as those made in the image of God, whom God loves so dearly, in whom God is so well pleased**. Just listen to what the **Gospel of Truth** says: **"Through the hidden mystery, Jesus Christ shone to the ones in the darkness of forgetfulness. He enlightened them and showed them a way. The way he taught them is truth. Because of this Transgression was angry with him and pursued him. She was distressed by him and left barren."** Oh, so many forces in this world don't want us to remember **who we are and how much we are loved**.

Even more, somehow, in the *mystery to end all mysteries*, **Jesus being nailed to that tree became the fruit of Father's knowledge, became the place of revelation—eat of this fruit, and it doesn't destroy you, but brings you into being. To discover this is to find contentment**.

Then, we are swept into a **time out of time** in the **Exultet**, drawing circles and circles of **heavenly hosts and choirs of angels and ancestors and salvation history and Mother Church and holy courts in radiant light and candles burning and holy flames**. The **passover of the Lord, freedom from bondage, breaking the bonds of death and hell, washing sin away, heaven and earth joining, humans reconciled to God**. *Good stuff*.

Creation dances its way into being, layer upon beautiful layer of *complexity* being laid down upon the canvas drawing us ever deeper into ***the mystery of life and being***.

We make our **Exodus through the Red Sea**, so thankful for our **liberation**, so **conflicted about the cost of that freedom**.

No sooner do we gain our freedom than we start chasing after idols, and it doesn't take long for **our hearts to harden like stone**. And so **Ezekiel** comes to **call us forward yet again**, promising to **give us a new heart, a heart of flesh, and a new spirit** to go along with it.

And then, Jesus comes along and quickens that new heart and builds upon that new spirit, showering gifts upon us. In language of Ephesians that is just poetry—we are given a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may know what is the hope to which he has called us.

And with **salvation history well in mind**, and **baptismal vows renewed**, we are *ready, really ready*, to have that **explosion of Easter joy** that comes when the **fanfare plays**, and “*Jesus Christ is risen today*” reaches all the way to the heavens.

From there it is a **cascade of imagery**—**alleluia upon alleluia**; **death no longer has dominion over him, or us**; **buried with Christ in his death, our old self crucified with him, raised with Christ in his resurrection, set free to walk in newness of life**; **stones rolled away, dazzling messengers, the news that he is not here, but he has risen, and we right along with him.**

Tonight is as much **Easter as we can pack into one service**, and it takes *every bit* of this night to **give voice to the joy we feel. Tonight, Jesus passes over from death to life, and he pulls us across the realms right along with him. Tonight, whatever death we have known, whatever loss, whatever sin, whatever tomb has sealed us away, tonight, the chains are burst, and we are set free to leave our graveclothes behind and dance our way with our Lord back into life.**

Brothers and sisters, you have made **the journey to come to this night**, and you have **made the journey through this night. Whatever is past is done; it no longer has dominion over you.**

So, let your alleluia’s rise, *tonight, tomorrow, and all the days to come.* Amen.

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