

Easter Vigil: From Ashes to Alleluia: Gen 1:1–31; 2:1–2; Ex 14:15—15:1; Is 55:1–11; Rom 6:3–11; Mk 16:1–7

Tonight, we stand in the heart of the greatest mystery of our faith. We began Lent with **ashes** on our foreheads. Tonight, we end in the joy of **Alleluia** on our lips. This is the journey of the Easter Vigil: **from ashes to Alleluia, from death to life, from sin to grace, from darkness to light.** And the beauty of tonight is this: **the whole Bible tells this story.**

1. In the Beginning, God Brings Light out of Darkness: The first reading from **Genesis** opens with these words: **“In the beginning... the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep”** (Gen 1:1–2). Darkness was there first. Chaos was there first. Emptiness was there first. But God did not leave creation in darkness. He spoke: **“Let there be light”** (Gen 1:3). This is the first Easter message. Whenever God speaks, darkness must give way to light. Whenever God acts, chaos begins to become creation. Whenever God enters, death begins to lose its power. Many of us know what darkness feels like. There are dark nights of suffering, confusion, sin, grief, loneliness, fear, and failure. Sometimes our hearts can feel like the empty earth in Genesis — disordered, wounded, and without peace. But tonight reminds us: **God is still creating.** The God who created the world is also able to **re-create our lives.**

2. God Leads His People from Bondage to Freedom: Then we heard the great story of **Exodus**. Israel was trapped between **Pharaoh’s army** and the **Red Sea**. Behind them was slavery. In front of them was an impossible obstacle. But God said to Moses: **“Tell the Israelites to go forward”** (Ex 14:15). What a powerful word! Not “go back.” Not “stay where you are.” But **go forward.** And God opened the sea. This is not only Israel’s story — it is our story too. Sometimes we feel trapped between the past and the future. Behind us are our sins, mistakes, regrets, wounds, addictions, fears. Before us is uncertainty. But Easter says: **God can make a way where there is no way.** The same God who opened the Red Sea has opened something even greater tonight — **the tomb of Christ.** The Red Sea was opened so Israel could escape slavery. The tomb is opened so humanity can escape **sin and death.** That is why tonight we move from ashes to Alleluia.

3. God Invites the Thirsty to Come: Then the prophet **Isaiah** cries out: **“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the water”** (Is 55:1). This is one of the most tender invitations in all of Scripture. God is speaking to thirsty people — people who are dry, tired, empty, and searching. How many people today are spiritually thirsty? Thirsty for peace. Thirsty for love. Thirsty for forgiveness. Thirsty for meaning. And what does God say? **“Come.”** Not: “Fix yourself first.” Not: “Become perfect first.” But simply: **Come.** And Isaiah gives us this promise: **“So shall my word be... it shall not return to me empty”** (Is 55:11). Tonight, God’s Word is not empty.

Tonight, His Word has become victory. Tonight, His promise has become resurrection.

4. In Christ, We Die and Rise: Then Saint Paul, in the Letter to the **Romans**, brings us to the very center of Easter: **“We were buried with him by baptism into death, so that... we too might walk in newness of life”** (Rom 6:4). This is the meaning of the Easter Vigil. We are not here simply to remember something that happened to Jesus long ago. We are here because **His death and resurrection must become our life**. If Christ died, then something in us must die too. And if Christ is risen, then something in us must rise. That is why the Church blesses baptismal water tonight. Because Easter is not only an event — it is a **new creation**. Genesis speaks of the first creation. Easter is the **new creation**.

5. The Tomb is Empty: And finally, in the Gospel of **Mark**, the women go to the tomb very early in the morning. They go carrying grief, sorrow, and love. They expected to anoint a dead body. Instead, they hear the astonishing words: **“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here”** (Mk 16:6). This is the turning point of human history. The One who was crucified is now risen. The One who was laid in the tomb is alive. The stone is rolled away. Death has been defeated. Sin has lost its final word. Notice this carefully: The women came expecting **death**, but they encountered **life**. How often we do the same. We go into situations expecting disappointment, pain, or failure. We carry the ashes of broken hopes and wounded hearts. But Easter announces: **The grave is not the end. The Cross is not the end. Ashes are not the end.** The end is **Alleluia**.

My dear brothers and sisters, tonight God is speaking to each one of us: If there is darkness in your life — **He is your light**. If there is bondage in your life — **He is your freedom**. If there is thirst in your soul — **He is your living water**. If there is death in your heart — **He is your resurrection**. So do not remain in the ashes. Come out of fear. Come out of them, Because Christ is risen. And tonight, with the whole Church, with all the saints, with heaven itself rejoicing, we lift our hearts and proclaim: **From ashes to Alleluia, from the tomb to triumph, and from death to life — Christ is risen! Alleluia! Amen. Happy Easter**