

## Easter – Easter Vigil 2026

**Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12**

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*‘Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee’<sup>1</sup>*

The disciples are told to meet the risen Jesus in Galilee and now we are at the end of Matthew’s Gospel. Galilee is where Matthew’s Gospel begins and it is where Jesus’ ministry begins. Galilee is also where his first disciples are from and almost all of Jesus’ ministry takes place. It is not a very large geographic area, about 45 miles from south to north at its furthest reaches. The Mediterranean is the West, the river Jordan forms its Eastern boundary, Syrophenician to the north, Samaria to the South and then keep going several days walk to reach Jerusalem, where he will be crucified.

It is an interesting contrast with the other readings we have had tonight: these are epic tales of creation, of exodus out of Egypt, the background of empires, battles, along with the tremendous movements of whole peoples, invaders and captives across the face of the ancient Middle-East.

In contrast, Galilee is at the heart of nowhere, really. People pass through here, they don’t stay. Matthew must have thought that this circular movement of Jesus returning to his earthly roots, was important.

Tonight there are 5 new members of the Church. Liam, Ben, Ellie, Leo and Lottie: It is a big event for you, and each of you has come here, to this point, from very different paths. I hope that you are both elated and relieved that now you are here, and this most beautiful night of prayer and light and significance will remain with you as a constant reminder of what you now are. You have been given the pearl of great value and it is intended to change your lives. You are Christians now.

In some ways it will seem as if life has not changed at all. You will have to return to school or work, you will continue in your married life or prepare for it, and have a family, You will drive, go to football games, have birthdays, go on holiday, pay a mortgage or rent, wash dishes, say farewell to loved ones and sit in traffic queues. This will not likely change at all. But it will all be different. From this day you are asked to look at it all, the whole world and yourself, through the eyes of Jesus Christ.

In a few minutes you will be temples of the Holy Spirit. God will abide in you. You are to walk with Jesus to serve and please God the Father in heaven. You are to become the hands, feet, eyes and ears of Jesus in this world. You are to become instruments of his Mercy and to call His mother your mother.

This means to desire to do what is good, and to hate what evil. You will not allow darkness to overcome you, no matter what happens around you: you are to fight temptation and serve what brings light. Be prayerful and thoughtful. Ask God and he will provide. This does not mean that you ask Him for what is trivial, but what is much harder to obtain: a communion with His Holiness in this life, to do His will. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 28:7

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not servitude, this is gratitude. Not everyone will be your friend, some will be your enemy, some friends will fall away. But He will be with you, because of this night.

The Lord's sacrifice on Good Friday is one of total self-giving. Everything he will do for us, except sin. Our response to Him should be one of reciprocated total self-giving. Everything you will do for Him, except sin. *As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, 'So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.'*<sup>2</sup>

Tonight, Jesus offers you a share in His own Resurrection. He does not want you, or any of us, to be slaves to the world - dead men walking - he wants us to walk in the world as free men and women, boys and girls, fully alive. And then, in His thirst for souls, He wishes to open heaven to us. But first, for a little time, we have to return to the work in the world he wishes us still to do: which for most of us means to love Him in the day to day.

The risen Jesus takes his disciples back to Galilee, so that they can begin again with a new understanding. Then they will go where the Holy Spirit leads them. Jesus will take you, his new disciples, back to where you began, Ashby, Moira, Castle Donington, Melbourne – wherever – for you to begin to lead the new life exactly where you are. Go, then, sealed in your faith. See with new eyes and a new heart.

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<sup>2</sup> Rom 6:11