

THE THREE DAYS TO EASTER

These services are from Church Rites (1994), prepared by the Commission on Worship, Lutheran Church of Australia.

The third service: Easter vigil

NOTES

- 1 This service is designed to be the third of the three services from Maundy Thursday leading up to Easter Sunday. If it is not used as such, it may need to be adapted; or parts of it may be used in an Easter Day communion service. The use of this service will vary according to the time of night and local requirements.
- 2 The paschal candle and individual candles are placed in readiness, and a fire is lit outside the church.
- 3 Additional hymns may be sung in the service, eg after the renunciation and confession and after the gospel or the sermon.

OUTLINE OF THE SERVICE

LITURGY OF LIGHT

Gathering

Greeting

Prayer

Preparation of candle

Lighting of candle

Procession

| Refurnishing of altar

Easter proclamation

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Introduction

First reading

Second reading

Third reading

Fourth reading

| Hymn

CONFESSION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH

Baptismal reading

| Address

| Baptism

Renunciation and confession

LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

| Confession and absolution

| Hymn of Adoration

Greeting

Prayer of Easter vigil (collect)

Gospel

| Sermon

Offering

Offertory

| Prayer

Communion liturgy

Post-communion prayer

CONCLUSION

Canticle

Blessing

| Recessional hymn

The third service: Easter vigil

LITURGY OF LIGHT

GATHERING

The service begins outside the church building, with the interior and exterior in darkness. The congregation gathers at the lit fire. Each person is given a candle, which is not lit until later.

GREETING

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Lord of all creation, we thank you for the gift of fire, through which you revealed your name to Moses, your presence to Israel in the desert, and your Spirit to the church at Pentecost. Let this fire be a sign of your presence with us, so that, set aflame with the fire of your love, we may come to feast with you in eternal light; through Jesus Christ, our light and life.

Amen.

PREPARATION OF CANDLE

The minister traces his finger over the cross in the paschal candle, saying:

Christ, yesterday and today,
Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The minister traces the four numbers of the current year in the four angles between the crossbars of the cross, saying:

- All time belongs to him,
- and all the ages;
- to him be glory and power,
- through every age and forever. Amen.

The minister may insert five red nails or pins, symbolising the five wounds of Christ, into the ends of the crossbars and at the point where the two meet, saying:

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

LIGHTING OF CANDLE

The minister lights the paschal candle from the fire, saying:

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

The worshippers light their candles from the paschal candle.

The candle-bearer takes the candle and lifts it high, saying:

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

PROCESSION

The worshippers follow the minister and assistants into the darkened church.

At the church door or at the centre of the nave the candle-bearer lifts the candle high and says a second time:

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

At the altar, the candle-bearer faces the people and says a third time:

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

The paschal candle is placed on a stand in the sanctuary.

REFURNISHING OF ALTAR

If the altar has not been refurnished before the service, it may be done during or after the procession.

EASTER PROCLAMATION

The minister or an assistant stands near the paschal candle and sings or says the Easter proclamation.

Rejoice, all heavenly choirs of angels, and sing for joy; sound the trumpet of victory for our marvellous king.

Rejoice, all the earth, shining with the radiance of Christ our eternal king; celebrate the dawn that banishes the darkness.

Rejoice, mother church, clothed with the brightness of Christ, and let this house resound with the voices of many people.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

For that is fitting and right.

It is truly fitting and right, with heart and mind and voice, to praise the Father almighty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He paid the debt of human sin, and freed us with his blood from our ancient bondage.

This is our passover feast; the true lamb has been killed, and his blood protects each home and makes us holy.

This is the night when God led our ancestors, the people of Israel, out of Egypt, and brought them safely across the Red Sea on dry ground.

This is the night when Christ broke the chains of death and ascended from hell in triumph.

This is the night when all who believe in Christ leave the darkness of sin and gather together as God's holy people.

This is the night when no-one fears the dark, for the darkness is as light, and the sun of righteousness rises with healing in its wings.

This is the night when heaven is joined to earth, and we are joined to God.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we pray that, like this candle, the light of Christ may drive out all darkness from among us; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The lights may be switched on and the people's candles extinguished.

A hymn may be sung.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTION

Friends in Christ: Hear the word of God which recalls how he has saved his people since ancient times.

FIRST READING

Genesis 1:1–5, 26,27,31 is read.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A meditative response follows. This may be a psalm, a verse of a hymn, or silent meditation.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, as you created us wonderfully, and yet more wonderfully redeemed us through the sacrifice of our passover Lamb: Let us share the divine life of him who came to share our human life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SECOND READING

Genesis 22:1,2,13,15–18 is read.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A meditative response follows.

Let us pray.

God, the Father of all the faithful, as you promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, and as you fulfilled that promise through the death and resurrection of your Son: Let us obey your call and trust in the promise of your grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THIRD READING

Exodus 14:15–31 is read.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A meditative response follows.

I will sing to the Lord, because he has won a glorious victory;

he has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.

The Lord is my strong defender;

he is the one who has saved me.

He is my God, and I will praise him,

my father's God, and I will sing about his greatness.

Your right hand, Lord, is awesome in power;

it breaks the enemy in pieces.

Lord, who among the gods is like you?

Who is like you, wonderful in holiness? Who can work miracles and mighty acts like yours?

Faithful to your promise, you led the people you had rescued;

by your strength you guided them to your sacred land.

You bring them in and plant them on your mountain,

the place that you, Lord, have chosen for your home,

the temple that you yourself have built.

You, Lord, will be king forever and ever.

Let us pray.

Lord God, as you freed your people from slavery and led them through the Red Sea as a sign of baptism: Grant that all the peoples of the world may become children of Abraham and be given new birth by water and the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FOURTH READING

Isaiah 55:1–11 is read.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A meditative response follows.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as you have created all things by the power of your word, and as you bring us salvation through created things: Pour out your life-giving water and refresh those who thirst for you, so that they may produce abundant fruit; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

HYMN

CONFESSION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH

BAPTISMAL READING

Romans 6:3–11 is read.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Let us pray.

Almighty and gracious God, as you have united us with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ through the waters of holy baptism, guide us as we live out the life he gained for us this night. Strengthen us in faith, so that we may triumph over the powers of darkness and reign with you in eternal light; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

ADDRESS

A brief address may be given if communion is not celebrated.

BAPTISM

If there are candidates for holy baptism, the minister leads those involved to the font. The following parts of the service for baptism are used: the

scriptural command; from the signing with the cross to the Lord's Prayer; from the renunciation and confession to the laying on of hands; and from the concluding prayer to the reception.

RENUNCIATION AND CONFESSION

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?

Yes, I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in God the Son?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.**

**The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty,
from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

** or: Christian; 'catholic' here means 'universal'*

Do you intend to remain firm in this faith and reflect it in love to God and your neighbour?

Yes, I do.

(May) God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given you new birth by water and the Spirit and has forgiven you all your sins, strengthen you with his Spirit †, so that you receive eternal life.

LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Friends in Christ: Let us draw near to God our Father with a true heart to confess our sins, and ask him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

**Almighty God, merciful Father,
I, a poor helpless sinner,
confess to you all my sins,
and repent of all the evil I have done.
I have deeply displeased you
and deserve your punishment
in time and in eternity.
But I am sorry for my sins,
and I ask you,
for the sake of the holy innocent sufferings and death
of your dear Son Jesus Christ,
to be gracious and merciful to me. Amen.**

By the authority of my Lord Jesus Christ, who has died and risen again for us, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

HYMN OF ADORATION

'Glory to God in the highest' or 'This is the feast' may be sung.

GREETING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF EASTER VIGIL (COLLECT)

EITHER

Let us pray.

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, as you made this most holy night shine with the glory of his resurrection: Pour out the Spirit of your Son on all those whom you have adopted, so that, renewed in body and soul, they may offer you pure worship; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OR

Let us pray.

Lord God our Father, maker of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb to await the glory that would be revealed, so we may endure the darkness of this present time in the sure confidence that we shall rise with him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

GOSPEL

The holy gospel is written in chapter _____ of the Gospel according to St _____, beginning at verse _____.

After the gospel:

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

An offertory is sung as the offering is brought to and presented at the altar.

PRAYER

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the wellbeing of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION LITURGY

The communion liturgy is followed, eg as in the Service—Alternative Form, from the preface to the dismissal.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray.

Strengthen, O Lord, the hands that have received your holy things, so that they may daily do your work and honour you. Let the ears that have heard your word be closed to the noise of clamour and dispute; let the eyes that have seen your great love also look on your face; let the tongues that have united with the angels in praising your holiness speak the truth; let the feet that have entered your presence walk in the light; and let the souls and bodies that have fed on your living body be restored to new life with you. And let your great love stay with us, so that we may give praise to you, now and forever.

Amen.

CONCLUSION

CANTICLE

The following canticle, or Psalm 98 or Psalm 150, is sung or said responsively or in unison.

Praise the Lord, all creation;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all angels of the Lord;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all heavenly powers;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, sun and moon;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, stars of heaven;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, rain and dew;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all winds;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, bitter cold and scorching heat;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, daylight and darkness;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, lightning and storm clouds;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Let the earth praise the Lord;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, mountains and hills;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, everything that grows;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, lakes and rivers;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, whales and sea creatures;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all birds;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all cattle and wild animals;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all people on earth;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Lord, all faithful people;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

Praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit;

sing his praise and honour him forever.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour †, and give you peace.

Amen.

RECESSIONAL HYMN

A recessional Easter hymn may be sung.