

The Vigil of Easter



But God demonstrates His own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

6:30 p.m. – Service of the Word and Sacrament

Order of Service
Saint Michael Lutheran Church
3595 Broadway, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

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Easter Vigil

April 19, 2025

– As We Gather –

Good Friday, the day of our Lord's crucifixion, death, and burial, was certainly a dark day, and not only emotionally. Saint Matthew describes the actual darkness during midday. Even the creation itself turned dark. How could anyone expect a normal night of sleep after such a great tragedy? Saint John tells us that after that silent Saturday, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb early on the first day of the week (Sunday) while it was still dark (John 20:1). Christians have from ancient times concluded the Lenten discipline with a night vigil, sometimes through the darkness of the entire Holy Saturday night until Sunday sunrise to celebrate the "Son-rise" of Jesus' resurrection. And so the great Vigil of Easter is celebrated, centered on the themes of darkness to light and God's rescue of His people by His mighty arm throughout Old Testament history and now through the Word and Sacraments of Christ. Tonight's celebration embraces the hand of the Lord at work in all of creation, redemption, and sanctification—the entire life of the Christian. Throughout this vigil service for Holy Saturday, we ponder Christ's death on the cross as a sacrifice for us all. In word and song, we contemplate how to live lives of sacrifice guided by Christ and the cross.

Hymn

"Ah, Holy Jesus"

by J. Heermann and J. Cruger

Ah, holy Jesus,
How hast Thou offended,
That we to judge Thee
Have in hate pretended?
By foes derided,
By Thine own rejected,
O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty?
Who brought this upon Thee?
Alas, my treason,
Jesus, hath undone Thee!

'Twas I, Lord Jesus,
I it was denied Thee;
I crucified Thee.

Lo, the Good Shepherd
For the sheep is offered;
The slave hath sinned,
And the Son hath suffered.
For our atonement,
While we nothing heeded,
God interceded.

Invocation & Invitation

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord, on this most holy night in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, we are gathered here in vigil and in prayer. This is the Passover of the Lord in which, by hearing His Word and celebrating His Sacraments, we share in His victory over death.

Prayer of the Day

Pastor: Let us pray... Almighty and most merciful God, once we were in darkness, but now we are light in Jesus Christ our Lord. Bless abundantly all who joyfully celebrate this night in faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fill them with Your heavenly blessing in Him who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

People: Amen.

Special Music

"What Wondrous Love Is This"

arr. by Craig Phillips

Holy Gospel

Genesis 1:1-2:3

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase

on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Please stand for the reading of the Gospel.

Lector: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-eighth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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.” So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Lector: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

Hymn of the Day

“Were You There”

Sermon

"The Hand of the Lord Who Made Us"

Pastor Dave Bass

Offering

As stewards of God's abundant gifts, we are called to use our time, talents and treasures to further His kingdom and serve one another in love. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

Let us continue to grow in faith and generosity, trusting that God will provide for all our needs as we faithfully serve Him.

Online contributions and donations can be made by clicking this link: tinyurl.com/SMLGiving. You may also mail your offerings to the church office: 3595 Broadway, Ft. Myers, FL 33901.

Creedal Hymn

"In Christ Alone"

by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest
drought and storm.
What heights of love,
what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled,
when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious
blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

Prayers and The Lord's Prayer

Confession & Absolution

Pastor: Let us confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

People: Almighty God, in Christ Jesus we have been raised to new life, but we often turn back to our old ways. We follow our own selfish desires instead of walking in the ways of our Lord. We listen to the temptations of the world instead of gladly hearing your Word. Have mercy on us, and forgive us. Lead us by your Spirit to walk in newness of life.

Pastor: Brothers and sisters in Christ, on this most holy night the church keeps vigil, awaiting the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle teaches us that by Baptism we were buried with Christ and lay dead in order that as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendor of the Father, so we should set our feet on the new path of life. Jesus suffered and died on the cross to take away our sins. He was raised in triumph over death. In Him we have forgiveness and new life. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Holy Communion

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. And most especially are we bound to praise You this holy night for the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, the very Paschal Lamb, who with nail-pierced hands bore the sins of the world on the cross and now, with wounds still visible above as glorified tokens of deliverance, restores everlasting life by reaching the lost, baptizing the penitent, healing the sick, teaching the faithful, and raising the dead to life. Therefore with Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, and with all the witnesses of the resurrection, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of pow'r and might:

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.

Hosanna. Hosanna.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.



Distribution Hymns

"Behold the Lamb"

*by Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty,
and Stuart Townend*

Behold the Lamb who bears our
sins away, slain for us—
And we remember the promise made
That all who come in faith find
forgiveness at the cross.
So we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of peace
around the table of the King.

The body of our Savior Jesus Christ,
torn for you—
Eat and remember;
The wounds that heal,
The death that brings us life paid
the price to make us one.
So we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of love
around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses every
stain of sin, shed for you—
Drink and remember
He drained death's cup
That all may enter in
to receive the life of God.
So, we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of grace
around the table of the King.

And so, with thankfulness and faith
we rise to respond—
And to remember our call to follow
In the steps of Christ
as His body here on earth.
As we share in His suffering,
we proclaim Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feat of heav'n
around the table of the King.

"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"

by F. Crosby and W. Doane

Jesus, keep me near the cross;
There a precious fountain,
Free to all, a healing stream,
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

Chorus:

In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever,
Till my ransomed soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the bright and morning star
Sheds its beams around me.

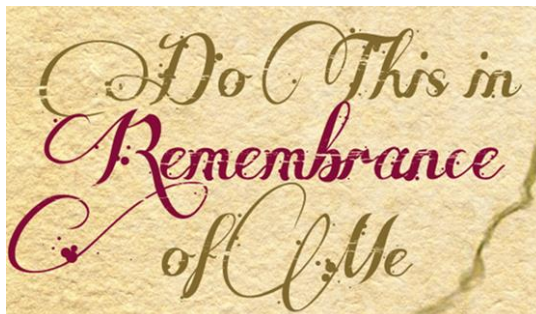
Chorus

Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day
With its shadow o'er me.

Chorus

Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
Hoping, trusting ever,
Till I reach the golden strand
Just beyond the river.

Chorus



Blessing

Easter Acclamation

Pastor: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Closing Hymn

"Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"

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Postlude

"Fanfare on 'Jesus Christ Is Risen Today'"

*arranged by
Phil Lehenbauer*

