

## **Easter Vigil C2025**

On this Easter Vigil night, I want to invoke these wonderful words found in Psalm 139: "Where can I go from your spirit? From your presence, where can I go? If I ascend to heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol [grave], you are there. (...) Your right hand holds me fast. If I say, 'Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light; - Darkness is not dark for you and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one". (V. 7-12).

These words pronounced hundreds of years before the birth of our Lord Jesus by King David express the journey of our Lord Jesus from darkness to light, from death to life, from the night of the deceased into the world of the living.

Those who killed our Lord wanted to bury him forever, to hide him in the womb of the earth and let him sink in the darkness of ground. They thought they had the last word. But, it was God who had the last word. God raised our Lord and gave him life anew. He allowed him to be alive and to appear to his disciples. God's plan was that Christ should die on the cross to save the world; then, to be raised on the third day.

Tonight, we proclaim to the whole world that Jesus Christ is alive. He has triumphed over death and the darkness of grave. He is risen. His resurrection is our resurrection. As he came into the world and took human flesh in order to share in our humanity, so we are rising with him to share in his divinity.

The Bible is full of signs that confirm that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Tonight is displayed before our eyes the sign of the empty tomb. When the pious women went to the tomb that morning, they did not expect to find it open. They were motivated by the love of that man whose teaching and actions had galvanized their whole country. They only wanted to show that they loved him and wanted to fulfill the requirements of the Jewish tradition by embalming his body.

But, what a surprise! The tomb was empty and the stone that covered it was rolled aside! Later, the angels told them: "Jesus has been raised; he is not here". That's the truth we proclaim tonight, that the gates of death could not prevail over our Lord. His cross and his radical love have the power to open the gates of death. His cross and his love are the key to the mystery of life. Anyone who wants to live under his cross and guided by his love will triumph over death in the same way.

[Only the Risen Christ can bring us to complete union with God, to the place where our own powers are unable to bring us. Truly Christ puts the lost sheep upon his shoulders and carries it home. Clinging to his Body we have life, and in communion with his Body we reach the very heart of God. Only thus is death conquered, we are set free and our life is hope.

This is the joy of the Easter Vigil: we are free. In the resurrection of Jesus, love has been shown to be stronger than death, stronger than evil. Love made Christ descend, and love is also the power by which he ascends. (...). In union with his love, borne aloft on the wings of love, as persons of love, let us descend with him into the world's darkness, knowing that in this way we will also rise up with him.

On this night, then, let us pray: Lord, show us that love is stronger than hatred, that love is stronger than death. Descend into the darkness and the abyss of our modern age, and take by the hand those who await you. Bring them to the light! In my own dark nights, be with me to bring me forth! Help me, help all of us, to descend with you into the darkness of all those people who are still waiting for you, who out of the depths cry unto you! Help us to bring them your light! Help us to say the “yes” of love, the love that makes us descend with you and, in so doing, also to rise with you. Amen!]

[Between brackets is an Extract from Pope Benedict XVI’s Homily of Easter Vigil 2007].

**Ezekiel 36: 16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6: 3-11; Luke 24: 1-12**



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