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Easter Vigil

Date: Saturday, April 4, 2026 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** A
First Reading: Genesis 1:1–2
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 104:1–2, 5–6, 10, 12–14, 24, 35 | **Response:** Psalm 104:30
Second Reading: Exodus 14:15–15
Responsorial Psalm: Exodus 15:1–6, 17–18 | **Response:** Exodus 15:1b
Third Reading: Isaiah 55:1–11
Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6 | **Response:** Isaiah 12:3
Epistle: Romans 6:3–11
Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23
Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:1-10
Preached at: the Chapel of Emerald Hill Children's Home **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

Brothers and sisters,

Tonight begins in the dark.

That matters, because we all know what darkness feels like. A dark room. A frightened heart. A hard week. A time when you do not know what comes next.

But then a flame is lit.

One small flame. One candle. And the darkness is no longer in charge.

Jesus Christ is risen. He is alive. He is the light of the world. And because he is alive, sin does not win, fear does not win, death does not win.

First we gathered round the light. Then we listened to the great story of God. In a little while we will remember our baptism, and then come to the table of the risen Lord. This whole night is one great song of hope.

Tonight we are not only promised resurrection - we receive the risen Lord, and we are strengthened to live as people of the light.

The readings told one big story. God does not give up on his people.

In the beginning, God made light. He made the sky, the sea, the stars, the birds, the trees, the animals, and us. That means you are not a mistake. You are not forgotten. You were made by God and made for life.

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Then Abraham trusted God, even when he did not understand. Then Moses and the people came to the sea, with no road ahead and danger behind. And God made a path through the water. Then the prophets promised that God would gather his people, wash them clean, and give them a new heart.

That is the story of tonight:
God creates.
God calls.
God saves.
God washes.
God restores and gives new life.

And all of it leads to Jesus.

Then we came to the Gospel. The women went to the tomb expecting sadness. They expected silence. They expected death.

Instead, the stone was rolled away.

And the first words they hear are: Do not be afraid.

That is one of the most beautiful lines in the Gospel.

Do not be afraid.

Not because nothing bad ever happens.
Not because life is always easy.
Not because we always understand.

Do not be afraid because Jesus is alive.

And that is why tonight the Church lets us touch that victory—first in water, and then at the altar.

Then comes the question: Why do you seek the living among the dead?

That question is for us too.

Why look for happiness in being unkind?
Why look for strength in bullying?
Why look for peace in lies?

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Because every sin is a kind of darkness that cannot finally satisfy. Christ's resurrection is God's victory over that darkness. Why go back to selfishness, anger, and old sins, when Jesus is calling us into life?

A broken torch cannot give light.
An empty well cannot give water.
A tomb cannot give life.

So do not look for life in dead places.

Look for life in Jesus.
Look for life in truth.
Look for life in kindness.
Look for life in prayer.
Look for life in forgiveness.
Look for life in helping someone who is left out or hurting.

That is where Jesus is.

And tonight the Church does not only tell us that Jesus rose long ago. Tonight she asks us to step into that new life ourselves.

That is why we bless water.
That is why we remember baptism.
That is why we renew our promises.

In baptism, God makes us his own.
He washes us.
He frees us.
He brings us into the life of Jesus.

Through the plunge into water, we are reborn by the Spirit. So when those promises are renewed tonight, mean them.

When you say no to sin, mean it.
When you say yes to faith, mean it.
And when we come to the Lord's table, let us come with open hearts, so that we may leave here alive with the risen Lord.

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Because Easter is not only about what happened to Jesus. It is about what Jesus wants to do in us.

He wants to lift the stone from our hearts.
He wants to bring light into the places we keep shut.
He wants to make us brave where we are fearful, kind where we are cruel, truthful where we are tempted to pretend.

And our world needs that light.

Tonight we pray for peace in the world. We pray for children in places of war, for families who are afraid, and for all who have lost their homes. Lord Jesus, risen from the tomb, bring peace where there is fighting, love where there is hatred, and hope where people are afraid. Teach us to be peacemakers too.

Because tonight there are children who feel alone.
There are families carrying worry.
There are people who are hungry, tired, and forgotten.
There are places where people tell lies, act cruelly, and think only of themselves.

Easter means we do not stand far away from all that.
It means that we become people of the light.

We tell the truth.
We share what we have.
We protect the weak.
We stay near the lonely.
We forgive.
We begin again.

The Easter candle is only one candle, but it lights many others. That is how the risen life of Jesus works. He lights one heart, then another, then another, until the dark begins to lose its hold.

So let him light your heart tonight.

If there is fear in you, let his light dispel it.
If there is sadness in you, let his light lift it.
If there is sin in you, let his light banish it.
If there is something hidden in you, let his light reveal it.

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Parents and grandparents, keep praying with your children. Easter light grows where daily faith is lived.

Let us carry these questions into the week ahead, and into our prayer tonight:

- Where is Jesus asking me not to be afraid?
- What do I need to leave behind, so that I can live more fully in his light?
- Who needs me this week to bring them kindness, friendship, or hope?

For Christ is risen.
He is truly risen.
Alleluia!

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.