



The Holy See

EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT OF EASTER

**HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
READ BY CARDINAL GIOVANNI BATTISTA RE**

*St Peter's Basilica
Holy Saturday, 19 April 2025*

[Multimedia]

It is night, as the Paschal candle slowly advances towards the altar. It is night, when the chant of the Easter Proclamation invites heartfelt rejoicing, “Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King... knowing an end to gloom and darkness” (*Exsultet*). It is in the last hours of the night that the events take place that are recounted in the Gospel we have just heard (cf. *Lk 24:1-12*). The divine light of the Resurrection begins to shine and the Lord’s Passover from death to life takes place as the sun is about to rise. The first light of dawn reveals that the great stone placed before Jesus’ tomb has been rolled away, as a few women, dressed in mourning, make their way to the tomb. The bewilderment and fear of the disciples is still enshrouded by darkness. Everything takes place in the night.

The Easter Vigil thus reminds us that the light of the Resurrection illumines our path one step at a time; quietly, it breaks through the darkness of history and shines in our hearts, calling for the response of a humble faith, devoid of all triumphalism. The Lord’s passage from death to life is not a spectacular event by which God shows his power and compels us to believe in him. For Jesus, it was not the end of an easy journey that bypassed Calvary. Nor should we experience it as such, casually and unthinkingly. On the contrary, the Resurrection is like little seeds of light that slowly and silently come to take root in our hearts, at times still prey to darkness and unbelief.

This “style” of God sets us free from a disembodied piety that wrongly imagines that the Lord’s Resurrection resolves everything as if by magic. Far from it: we cannot celebrate Easter without

continuing to deal with the nights that dwell in our hearts and the shadows of death that so often loom over our world. Christ indeed conquered sin and destroyed death, yet in our earthly history the power of his Resurrection is still being brought to fulfilment. And that fulfilment, like a small seed of light, has been entrusted to us, to protect it and to make it grow.

Brothers and sisters, during this Jubilee Year in particular, we should feel strongly within us the summons to let *the hope of Easter blossom* in our lives and in the world!

When the thought of death lies heavy on our hearts, when we see the dark shadows of evil advancing in our world, when we feel the wounds of selfishness or violence festering in our flesh and in our society, let us not lose heart, but return to the message of this night. The light quietly shines forth, even though we are in darkness; the promise of new life and a world finally set free awaits us; and a new beginning, however impossible it might seem, can take us by surprise, for Christ has triumphed over death.

This message fills our hearts with renewed hope. For in the risen Jesus we have the certainty that our personal history and that of our human family, albeit still immersed in a dark night where lights seem distant and dim, are nonetheless in God's hands. In his great love, he will not let us falter, or allow evil to have the last word. At the same time, this hope, already fulfilled in Christ, remains for us a goal to be attained. Yet it has been entrusted to us so that we can bear credible witness to it, so that the Kingdom of God may find its way into the hearts of the women and men of our time.

As Saint Augustine reminds us, "The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is new life for those who believe in him; this mystery of his passion and resurrection you ought to know well and to imitate in your lives" (*Sermon* 231, 2). We are to reflect Easter in our lives and become messengers of hope, builders of hope, even as so many winds of death still buffet us.

We can do this by our words, by our small daily acts, by decisions inspired by the Gospel. Our whole life can be a presence of hope. We want to be that presence for those who lack faith in the Lord, for those who have lost their way, for those who have given up or are weighed down by life; for those who are alone or overwhelmed by their sufferings; for all the poor and oppressed in our world; for the many women who are humiliated and killed; for the unborn and for children who are mistreated; and for the victims of war. To each and all of them, let us bring the hope of Easter!

I like to think of a thirteenth-century mystic, Hadewijch of Antwerp, who, inspired by the Song of Songs, describes her suffering over the absence of the beloved and invokes the return of love so that — as she says — "there may be a turning point to my darkness" (*Poesie, Visioni, Lettere*, Genoa 2000, 23).

The risen Christ is the *definitive turning point* in human history. He is the hope that does not fade. He is the love that accompanies us and sustains us. He is the future of history, the ultimate

destination towards which we walk, to be welcomed into that new life in which the Lord himself *will wipe away all our tears* and “death, mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (*Rev 21:4*). And it falls to us to proclaim this Easter hope, this “turning point” where darkness becomes light.

Sisters, brothers, the Easter season is a time of hope. “There still is fear, there still is a painful awareness of sinfulness, but there also is light breaking through... Easter brings the good news that although things seem to get worse in the world, the Evil One has already been overcome. Easter allows us to affirm that even though God seems very distant and although we remain preoccupied with many little things, our Lord walks with us on the road... Thus there are many rays of hope casting their light on our way through life” (H. Nouwen, *A Cry for Mercy, Prayers from the Genesee*).

Let us make room for the light of the Risen Lord! And we will become builders of hope for the world.