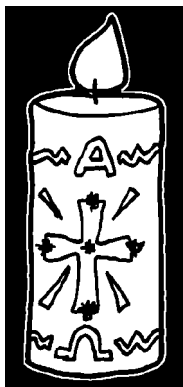


Easter Vigil



We began in darkness, behind the church rooms, encircling a brazier in which the new fire was kindled and from which the Paschal candle was lit symbolising the Resurrection of Christ, the light of the World. Once lit and blessed the flame was passed from the Paschal candle to the candles we each held as we processed into the church, so that we moved from the darkness outside into the light of the church. Once inside we listened to the Easter proclamation, the Exultet.

Three readings from the Old Testament reiterated the message of God's love for us from the very beginning, through the Red Sea from Egypt and through food for the soul, freely given. Each reading re-enforcing the message of God's redemption of humanity. (Genesis 1: 1-5; 26-end, Exodus 14:15 - 15:1 and Isaiah 55:1-11). The Church lights were put on and we sang the Gloria, omitted from our worship through Lent and listened to the New Testament reading of emancipation through Christ (Romans 6:3-11) and the Gospel Reading, telling of the women's discovery of the empty tomb (Luke 24:1-12).

Michael told us of St. Patrick who in converting Ireland took a pagan custom from the druids, whose chief lit a beacon on a hill to signal spring to his followers. St. Patrick built a bigger fire on a taller hill and lit it before the chief druid's to signal Christ's resurrection and love for us at Easter's new beginning.

The next stage of the service was the renewal of our Baptismal vows. Here the service was made particularly special by the inclusion of Jacqui Procter's baptism. (In the early days of the Church all baptisms took place at Easter). Jacqui was baptised with water from the River Jordan, then robed in white by her sponsors, the ancient symbol of the purity of the new life of Christ and we were all sprinkled with holy water.

Our service finished with the lighting of Jacqui's candle from the Paschal candle and we all joined in sending her out to "Shine as a light in the world to the Glory of God the Father."

This service is usually the first Eucharist of Easter and is often held just before dawn so that the movement from darkness to light is reflected in the reality of the rising of the sun. Even without this the service was powerful and symbolic and I felt strengthened and privileged to be celebrating with an unbroken chain of Christians throughout the world and across the centuries.

Donya Young

**Many people will be surprised when Jesus comes again
but nobody will be mistaken.**

Anon