

+

## EASTER VIGIL

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023)

*Credo.*  
I believe.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**W**HAT A PRODIGIOUS catechesis the Church offers us during this holy night! This year, we have the grace to celebrate a baptism: wouldn't it be an invitation to start again on the path on which we set off a very long time ago, when we were carried on the baptismal font, and plunged in Christ and born again in Him?

From the very beginning of the Paschal Vigil, there is nothing more to be said. The Church puts before her children the central mystery of faith: Christ's resurrection. St. Paul affirmed to the Corinthians: "And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain: and your faith is also vain."<sup>a</sup> But it wouldn't be enough for her to limit herself to the mere proclamation of the mystery. The Church pedagogically puts the mystery in its context, the plan of divine love for man, a plan that began on the very first day of creation, and will unfold until the end of times, to be completed in the face to face of eternity.

How was it possible better to manifest this inexhaustible love than by a blazing fire? From this blaze was taken the fire to

*a. 1 Cor 15:14.*

kindle the Easter candle, a symbol of risen Christ, the true light that gives light to every man who comes into the world. The risen Christ is the gift that the Father invites us to encounter,

a. Blessing of the Paschal Candle.

yesterday and today, the Beginning and the End, Alpha and Omega, His are the times and the ages, to Him be glory and empire, through all eternal ages. Amen.<sup>a</sup>

b. *Ibid.*

But if Christ is the Risen One, it is because He victoriously went through the trial of death: “By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ our Lord guard and keep us. Amen.”<sup>b</sup>  
And from now on,

c. *Ph 2:9–11.*

God also hath exalted him and hath given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess, “Jesus Christ is the Lord,” to the glory of God the Father.<sup>c</sup>

d. *Ex 13:18–22.*

As we receive the light of the risen Christ, all darkness is banished from our hearts and minds. We walked the way from darkness to light as we entered the church behind the Easter candle, and imitated the Hebrew people fleeing from Egypt<sup>d</sup>, and walking during the night through the desert behind a pillar of fire. Not only did we follow the candle, but we have also, one after another, received the light from the candle, which has illuminated our own candles, thus making us able to transmit this light. How could we not give thanks during this night, for those who were instrumental in the birth and progress of our faith? How could we not beseech the grace of perseverance for those to whom we transmitted this gift?

The singing of the *Exsultet* and the proclamation of the four readings have given us the keys to understand the preceding rites.

For the last part of the Vigil, the whole Church, that of earth and that of heaven, is solemnly convoked with the singing of the Litanies of the Saints.

At the core of the Litanies take place the blessing of the water, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and the renewal of our baptismal vows.

Until now the Church had brought us, in a way despite us, face to face with the mystery of the divine love that comes and restores our lives. She now expects from us an act, the affirmation that we make our own this divine plan, that we want to enter into communion with it.

No one can serve two masters at the same time. The choice of God entails renunciation to Satan, to the works he inspires, to the pomps he unfolds.

In a positive way, the choice of God also entails believing the fundamental mysteries of our faith: the mystery of the Holy Trinity, by which we profess one only God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the mystery of the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

But can we really still believe in this holiness? Many Christians are doubting, since the teaching of many clerics is at the very least disquieting, and other ones give a deplorable witness of life. If believing in God is still possible, believing in the holiness of the Church might seem to be insuperable.

But do we even have the right to ask this question? Wouldn't it mean excluding ourselves from participation in the Church?

Indeed, the Church is holy, of the holiness Christ, her Head, bestows upon her. She is holy, too, of the influence of angels, who day and night ceaselessly proclaim the glory of God, and make themselves servants of men on the path of holiness. The Church is holy, of the holiness of so many men and women, who before us walked on the road of life, and whose name, for some of them, we just pronounced. They were, they are for us little lights bearing witness to the joy found in following Christ, in being in the world apostles of light, and not of darkness. The Church is holy, too, of the holiness mingled with misery which is our own.

Indeed, if the Church is holy, she also receives sinners in her bosom. There lies the mystery. Even though our misery is far from contributing to her holiness, nonetheless it doesn't reach her.

Don't therefore let us set up ourselves as judges of the Church! Who are we to judge of a holiness, for which God Himself stands security? The gates of hell will not prevail

against her. Let us rather enter resolutely into the communion of saints, in which we believe, too.

In the school of the saints, let us proclaim the Gospel in all its radicalism. Hasn't the Lord invited us to be perfect as the Father is perfect? Hasn't He invited us to eternal life in God? He Who didn't come for the healthy, but for the sinners, is still coming today, and will always come, for me, for all of you, for all the faithful, the priests, the bishops, and the pope. All of us, we are the Church, and it is entirely up to us that the holiness the Church has received from God should radiate through our own and poor humanity. This is the disposition, unexpected, and even imprudent in human eyes, God has established in His plan of love: He wants to make use of our poor beings to communicate His ineffable holiness. Don't let us allow prophets of doom to make our faith, hope, and charity, grow cold. The faults of others cannot be pretexts for our own sloth. The Church is holy. Let us simply become saints.

During this holy night, let us burn with this fire warming us up, this fire comforting us on the tortuous roads of our lives. The Church is holy, of this holiness that takes its source in God, and is poured out on us through Christ's death and resurrection. Rather than questioning ourselves about the holiness of the Church, let us be born again to life in the blood of Christ. Let us be saints.

Christ is risen, He is truly risen.

*Regina caeli, laetare. Amen, Alleluia.*

