

Sermon for Easter Sunrise – Exodus 12:1-14

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

On Good Friday, our Lord was crucified and laid in a tomb. As it was in the beginning of creation, so it was with our Lord's Passion. After completing His work of redemption, He declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath Day. And last evening was the beginning of an observance which has spanned the centuries from the time of the very death of Christ itself. As the first disciples gathered in vigil (that is, in vigilant prayer) after their Lord was closed in the tomb, so we too gathered in vigil last evening: singing of God's triumph and hearing stories of God's deliverance of His people in days of old. As the Church gathered in holy vigil last night, she waited with eager anticipation for the blessed news that Christ who died had risen from the dead. The first vigil concluded with the Resurrected Christ appearing to His disciples. So too, our vigil ends now with Christ's appearing to us, His disciples, in His Body and Blood in the Sacrament.

The liturgy for the Easter Vigil places the death and resurrection of Christ in the context of the Passover: "This is the Passover of the Lord in which, by hearing His Word and celebrating His Sacraments, we share in His victory over death." These words also recall Paul's words to the Corinthians and us: "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

The Passover was closely connected with the exodus of God's people from Egypt. On the night before the Lord delivered the Israelites from bondage, they were to take an unblemished lamb and slaughter it, smearing the blood from the lamb on their doorposts. They were also commanded to eat the roasted flesh of the Passover lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

That night, as the Israelites hunkered down in the safety of their blood-smeared homes, the angel of death slew the firstborn in Egypt. The tenth and final plague came in the form of death. But God be praised! God's people were spared the blade of divine judgment. They were saved by lamb's blood! And then they fled, leaving their 400-year prison with a pillar of divine fire as their guide. That night, God brought Israel out of Egypt, having smote the firstborn of Pharaoh and all his house. It was the Lord's Passover; it was also the Lord's victory.

And this was not just to be a one-time thing. The exodus itself was not repeated again, but the remembrance of it was to be kept as a "feast to the Lord" throughout their generations. The Lord said, "For on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever" (Exodus 12:17). God wanted them to remember this day forever. He wanted

them to remember His great work of redemption, and to celebrate it annually with their families.

But this Passover festival that commemorated their exodus from the hands of Pharaoh served an even greater purpose. It was a type; it was a shadow of that greater exodus, when the Lord's own firstborn Son would suffer the pains of death for us sinners. That is why Paul says that "Christ, *our Passover lamb*, has been sacrificed."

Christ is the true Passover Lamb, whose blood was shed so that we might be spared from eternal death. By His death and resurrection, God has brought His true Israel, we the Church, out of the Egypt of sin and death.

But as in Moses' time, the Lord's Passover would not be complete without a meal. The Israelites were commanded to eat the flesh of the roasted lamb. Likewise, our Lord says to the true Israel: "Take and eat, this is My body which is given for you." In the salutary gift of the Lord's Supper, we feast on the body and blood of God's Lamb, who was sacrificed for us on the altar of the cross.

Paschal Food. Paschal Drink. How fitting that we celebrate this feast at the conclusion of our vigil and the dawn of Easter, as we recount the works of Christ's redemption for us. The blood shed for us on the cross, and sprinkled on us in our Baptism, is smeared on the doorposts of our hearts as we receive it this morning at the Lord's Altar.

And since our Lord's precious blood will touch our hearts and absolve us, all fear and dread must flee. All worry and doubt about our standing with God must cease. For "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

The greater exodus of our Lord's death and resurrection took place only once. Like the exodus of Israel from Egypt, it is not repeated over and over again. But we remember it and we recall it every year during Holy Week and Easter. We proclaim it and remember it every time we receive this Paschal Food. "Do this in remembrance of Me," said Christ. This is the perpetual feast from the Lord for us.

This is the morning after the Lord's Passover, when Christ passed over from death to life. The seal of the grave is broken. Christ has appeared to His disciples. That is what we remember and celebrate this Easter dawn. Our Lord has triumphed over death and He now appears in the salutary gift of His body and blood for us.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠