

The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night – April 20, 2019 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 8:00pm – 690 words

A very warm welcome to you all, as we gather around our Bishop and keep this great vigil of our Lord's resurrection. I especially congratulate those who have been preparing to receive the sacraments and make their profession of faith, before their family and friends here present. Over these past months you have studied, you have prayed – but the process really began before that, as the Lord Jesus began his quiet work in your hearts sometime before.

When some of you are baptized, others make a profession of faith, and all of you are confirmed tonight – and then when all of us here together worship the risen Lord really present in the Holy Eucharist – we will yet be unable to say that God's work has been brought to completion in any one of us. No, we are all still very much on the way. Tonight is a milestone for you catechumens and candidates, but the goal is still to be realized. That is the case for all.

Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to reach the goal. The first sin of Adam occasioned was that “happy fault” that we heard so beautifully sung about in the Exsultet hymn of praise beginning this solemn Mass. Adam and Eve were to be happy in the earthly paradise – but they failed the test and ushered death into the world. But their sin led God to send us his Son, who not only vanquished death but revealed for us an even greater destiny.

Heaven, then, opened by Christ's death and resurrection, is the goal we seek on our life's journey. Every happiness in this world – including the joy you catechumens and candidates may experience this night – is ultimately fleeting, incomplete. We long for that perfect happiness that exceeds comprehension but that we know awaits us in the life to come. So we continue our passage through this world that also has so much pain and tears; we must press on to the goal.

I would like to offer three concrete suggestions to our catechumens and candidates – and they're good reminders for us all –, as we do go forward on the way. The first thing is: Get involved! Register in a parish – whether here or wherever you choose to attend. Don't put it off. Be counted and share your gifts. Get to know other parishioners and break bread with them. Ask the Lord to show you how he desires you to be of service – and be willing to be surprised.

The second suggestion: Make a plan now about your sacramental life! Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Monthly confession – or more often, if needed. And for those from non-Catholic families, remember what I said in class about instructing your family on calling a priest if you're ever in need of the Anointing of the Sick. The “buzz” of this night will wear off – and then your practice of the faith will depend upon the framework you have established.

A final thing: Remember that Jesus has chosen you to be his disciples! A disciple is a student: he or she continues to learn. A disciple bears fruit: he or she leads others to the Master. RCIA classes end, but your learning must continue. Our faith is a gift into which we can always go deeper. And be sure to pray that as you do that, you will be an instrument of Christ's love, leading others to his risen life as well. He will certainly work through you – if you let him.

As we worship the risen Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist on this holiest of nights, may we thank him for all that he has done for us. When Peter saw the empty tomb he left amazed at what he saw; we ask Jesus to fill us with a similar awe at the unfathomable gift of life and salvation that he has offered to each of us, who have in no way merited it. He is risen indeed – and he invites us to continue with him on the journey – through death, to eternal life and joy.