

**The Easter Vigil
(Year B)****Seven (!) Old Testament Readings**

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| 1. <u>Six Days of Creation</u>
(Genesis 1:1-2:2) | → | The Resurrection—New Creation
(see esp. <u>Gen 1:2-5</u>) |
| 2. <u>Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac</u>
(Genesis 22:1-18) | → | Death of Jesus on Calvary |
| 3. <u>The Crossing of the Red Sea</u>
(Exodus 14:15-15:1) | → | Waters of Baptism
(see esp. <u>Exod 14:15-30</u>) |
| 4. <u>The Wedding of God and His Bride</u>
(Isaiah 54:5-14) | → | Christ the Bridegroom |
| 5. <u>The Feast of Water, Grain, and Wine</u>
(Isaiah 55:1-11) | → | The Eucharistic Feast |
| 6. <u>Wisdom has Appeared on Earth</u>
(Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4) | → | Sacred Scripture |
| 7. <u>Sprinkle Clean Water: A New Heart</u>
(Ezekiel 36:16-28) | → | Sacrament of Baptism
(see esp. <u>Ezek 36:25-26</u>) |

Romans 6:3-11—Baptism as Burial and Resurrection

1. Burial with Christ: immersion in waters of baptism (6:4)
2. Resurrection with Christ: walk in “newness of life” (6:4)

Mark 16:1-7—The Resurrection of Jesus (Easter Sunday)

1. “The Sabbath” = Saturday (Sundown Friday → Sundown Saturday) (16:1)
2. “The First Day” = Sunday (cf. Genesis 1:1-4)

Living Tradition: Satan and the Baptismal Font

First, you entered into the outer hall of the Baptistry... you heard the command to stretch forth your hand, and as in the presence of Satan you renounced him. Now you must know that this figure is found in ancient history... [T]here, the tyrant [Pharaoh] pursued even to the sea that ancient people; and in like manner... the author of evil, followed you, even to the very streams of salvation. *The tyrant of old was drowned in the sea; and this present one disappears in the salutary water.* (*Mystagogical Catechesis* 1.2-3; trans. F. L. Cross)

Easter Vigil: Blessing of the Baptismal Water (Easter Vigil)

O God, who by invisible power accomplish a wonderful effect through sacramental signs and who in many ways have prepared *water*, your creation, *to show forth the grace of Baptism*;

O God, *whose spirit in the first moment of the world’s creation hovered over the waters*, so that the very substance of water would even then take to itself the power to sanctify;

O God, *who caused the children of Abraham to pass dry-shod through the Red Sea*, so that the chosen people, set free from slavery to Pharaoh, would prefigure the people of

the baptized... [Lowering the Paschal Candle into the water either once or three times..] May *the power of the Holy Spirit*, O Lord, we pray, come down through your Son into the fullness of this font, so that all who have been buried with Christ by Baptism into death may rise again to life with him. (James Socias, *Daily Roman Missal*, pp. 500-501.)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Easter Vigil, Year B)

1. Have you ever wondered about why the Church chooses so many Old Testament readings? Can you see clearly now the rationale for some of the Readings? In particular, how does the theme of “water” appear in them?

2. Do you ordinarily think of the sacrament of Baptism as being “buried” and “raised” with Christ? What are the implications for this way of looking at the sacrament?

3. Take some time to reflect on the role of water in salvation history as expressed in the Blessing of the Baptismal Water. Which of the prefigurations of Baptism in the Old Testament is most powerful to you. Why?

For Further Study

1. CCC 638-658: This section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains the Church’s official teaching the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is extremely rich and can serve as food for meditation.
2. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments* (Popular Patristics; New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977). St. Cyril’s fourth-century explanations of the sacraments were giving to catechumens preparing for baptism in the church of Jerusalem in the fourth century A.D. They are a fascinating look into the mysteries behind the rites that we know so well. Must reading for any Christian interested in going deeper into the meaning of the sacraments.