

The Easter Vigil

(Year B)

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| <i>Reading 1</i> | Genesis 1:1-2:2 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 |
| <i>Reading 2</i> | Genesis 22:1-18 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11 |
| <i>Reading 3</i> | Exodus 14:15-15:1 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18 |
| <i>Reading 4</i> | Isaiah 54:5-14 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13 |
| <i>Reading 5</i> | Isaiah 55:1-11 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 |
| <i>Reading 6</i> | Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11 |
| <i>Reading 7</i> | Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 |
| <i>Second Reading</i> | Romans 6:3-11 |
| <i>Responsorial Psalm</i> | <i>Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23</i> |
| <i>Gospel</i> | Mark 16:1-7 |

Today we celebrate the great Easter Vigil, the feast of feasts, or as it said in Latin, the feast of *pascha*, which is the word for Passover. So this is the great Passover of the liturgical year. It's the most important feast day in the entire cycle and what we're going to do in this video is look at the readings for the Easter vigil. You'll notice as we do so that there's a little bit of a difference with last year. So if you have a missal and you can look at the readings for Easter vigil, you'll notice that although the Old Testament readings and the Psalms and the New Testament reading don't change, each year the gospel does change. So in year A we looked at the Gospel of Matthew and we focused on how some of the Old Testament readings for the vigil mass prepare for the celebration of Easter on Sunday. Why is it that Jesus rises from the dead on Sunday? What's the significance of Sunday? In this video I want to do the same thing but I want to shift focus to another important aspect of the Easter vigil, which is the theme of water and the sacrament of baptism.

Baptism plays a very big role in the celebration of the Easter vigil, especially when we have people coming into the church at the Easter vigil, receiving the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and holy communion. So in this video, what we're going to do is we're going to highlight that theme as we work through some of the Old Testament readings, culminating in the Gospel. And, then we'll take it into the Easter vigil itself and into some of the liturgical actions individually — especially the rite of baptism — and try to show how baptism and Easter go together from a biblical point of view. So without any further ado, let's do that. One of the first things you'll notice if you look at the handout for the presentation today is that there are seven, yes that's right, seven Old Testament readings for the Easter vigil, along with seven Responsorial Psalms with each of those readings. Now most churches don't read all seven readings, they'll usually pick three or four, maybe five. But they're all strategically chosen as preparations for the great celebration of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. So what I want to do in this video is start with the Old Testament readings. I don't want to begin with the gospel, I want to begin with the Old Testament readings and see how they lead up to and are fulfilled in the gospel, with a particular focus on the theme of water that flows through the readings, pun intended, for the Easter vigil. So let's begin with the very first reading for today, which is really my favorite reading of the entire year, it's what's called the hexameron, the six days of creation in Genesis 1, culminating in the seventh day of the Sabbath. So this is the first reading for every year on the Easter vigil for year A, B and C, and in it we see the theme of water appear on the very first day. This is the reading, Genesis 1:1-5 says this:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.¹

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

Alright, stop there. Now the reading goes on for much longer to catalog all six days of creation and then the seventh, but for our purposes I just want to focus on day one here, and I want to say a couple things about it. First, number one, notice that day one is associated with the spirit of God going about, hovering about, moving over the face of the waters of creation. So the Hebrew word here for spirit, *ruah*, literally means spirit, or wind, or breath; it has a double, even a triple, meaning in both Hebrew and Greek, and you can kind of see why. If you breathe out, it's like your breath but also represents the fact that you're alive, your spirit. So the image here is being used of God's spirit moving about the face of the waters on the very first day of creation, in the beginning. And, it's on that day that God says, "let there be light" and when he says let there be light, there was light, and the light separates the light from the darkness. And, it says there was evening and there was morning, one day, or some translations have 'the first day.'

Now notice here from a Jewish perspective, in terms of the hexameron, the first day means the first day of the week, which we call Sunday, okay. So we are gathering to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday and so the Church chooses to open that feast day with the very first description of the very first Sunday in the Bible, and it's the Sunday of creation. So from a Jewish perspective in the First Century A.D. the world was created on Sunday, the world began on Sunday, the world began on the first day of the week, and the world began on a day when the spirit of God was doing something, was moving as an agent of creation in particular with water, okay. So you've got spirit, water and Sunday, they're all linked together on the very first page of the Bible, and in the very first reading for today. So I think you can already see where this is going. The Church is preparing us not just for the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, but for the sacrament of baptism that she's going to celebrate on this particular feast of Easter. Alright, so there's your first link with the theme of water for the Easter vigil readings, but it doesn't stop there.

Now you want to turn to the third reading for the Easter vigil, which is the Exodus from Egypt and the famous episode of the crossing of the Red Sea. This is in Exodus 14:15-15:1. And now I know that for me at least, I always kind of wonder, why are we reading the crossing of the Red Sea on Easter vigil, right? If this is the great feast of *pascha*, if this is the feast of Passover, why don't we read from Exodus 12,

which tells about the sacrifice of the lamb, you know, being offered for the people and the people being set free on the night of Passover. Why are we reading the crossing of the Red Sea instead of the Passover episode? Well, if we look at the reading, let's go through it carefully, and we'll begin to see what the Church's rationale is in this. But again, the clue is the link of water and deliverance, the imagery of water. So Exodus 14:15 says this; this is right before the people are about to be delivered from the land of Egypt. They've gotten out of slavery through the Passover but they're not yet in the desert:

The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen." Then the angel of God who went before the host of Israel moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness; and the night passed without one coming near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel; for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its wonted flow when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled into it,

and the LORD routed the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Here's the key verse:

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. And Israel saw the great work which the LORD did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD; and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Okay, pause there. It's kind of a long story but it's a very dramatic one and it's one that if you've watched the famous Ten Commandments film you'll be familiar with. Because it's such a visually, such a dramatic scene, where when the waters of the Red Sea not only part down the middle but form a wall to the right-hand and to the left-hand of the Israelites as they cross over the sea dry-shod. Whereas Pharaoh and his chariots, when they get into the water, the sea returns and it destroys them, right, and drowns them in the waters of the Red Sea. So the question is why does the Church read this at Easter vigil? What does it have to do with the Easter vigil? Well if you know the New Testament you'll recall that in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul actually describes the crossing of the Red Sea as a prefiguration, as a type of foreshadowing, of the sacrament of baptism, right. So even though this isn't one of the readings for the Easter vigil, I still want to bring it to your attention. In 1 Corinthians 10:1 and following Paul says:

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea...

Notice that, Paul says in 1 Corinthians that our fathers, meaning the ancient Israelites at the time of the exodus, were all under the cloud and they were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. So what's being described there? Well the cloud is the glory cloud; it's the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by

day, and the sea is of course the waters of the Red Sea. So he's describing the passing through the waters of the Red Sea and the power of the cloud protecting Israel from the Pharaoh and his chariots as a prefiguration of the sacrament of baptism, as a kind of anticipation of the salvation that is now wrought for Christians through the waters of baptism, and watch this, through the cloud of the Holy Spirit. Because whenever you go back to the Old Testament there are two symbols for the spirit in the Old Testament that are everywhere: water and cloud, or pillar of fire. Whenever you see a pillar of fire, whenever you see water, those are both signs of the activity of God's spirit. So what the spirit of God is doing here is protecting the Israelites from Pharaoh through the glory cloud, but it's also the wind of God that actually parts the waters of the Red Sea. So it's a kind of re-creation. Just as the spirit of God, or the wind of God, was hovering over the waters at the creation of the world on the dawn of the first day, so now the cloud of God's glory and the wind of his spirit parts the waters of the Red Sea overnight, let's the Israelites through and then at dawn the waters come back and conquer the enemies of Israel. And, Paul sees that as a kind of baptism of the ancient Israelite people pointing forward to the deliverance that will be wrought through Christ.

So why does the Church give us this reading on Easter vigil? Again, it's because at the Easter vigil, above all, especially in the ancient church, people would be baptized. Converts to the faith would go through a time of instruction, especially during lent, where they would fast and pray and prepare to receive the sacrament of baptism. The same thing happens today in the RCIA program. Those who are coming into the Church, especially those who have never received baptism, are going to be instructed for a period of time. They're going to go through the scrutinies, they're going to go through special acts of preparation to receive the sacrament of baptism, above all, on Easter Sunday, right...especially at the Easter vigil I should say, which begins that night. I mean the Sunday begins that night because that's how Jewish liturgies and Catholic liturgies are, the vigil anticipates the feast of the next day in any case. So this is a powerful, powerful sacramental typology. It's a typology that prefigures what's going to happen in the waters of baptism. So the Church gives it to us that night. One other element you might notice there about Exodus 15 is what makes the waters of the Red Sea part? Moses stretches out his rod over the sea, right. So you have also the mediation of Moses, who is a deliverer figure but who is also a priestly figure, right. He points forward to Christ, he points

forward to the priesthood. The staff is a symbol of the bishop, it's a symbol of the priesthood of the bishop, that participates in the priesthood of Christ. And, so the people who are going to be delivered on Easter vigil, they're not just doing it on their own, it's through the priesthood, it's through the successor to the apostles, especially when the bishop celebrates the Easter vigil mass, that the power of the spirit of God is going to come down from heaven, part the waters of the baptismal font, and bring salvation to those who receive the sacrament. So it's a very powerful typology at work here as well.

The fifth reading will be the third one I highlight tonight, if that's confusing enough, I hope that's really confusing. It's the reading from Isaiah 55. Now this reading doesn't often get read because it's toward the end of the list, but I still think it's worth highlighting here. In Isaiah 55 the prophet gives an oracle about a great feast, it's the feast of the age of salvation. And, most people associate this with the Eucharistic feast, and that's true but I want you to highlight the theme of water as well. So in Isaiah 55:1, he proclaims this:

"Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant..."

And, then it goes on and on there. For our purposes notice the imagery of inviting those who are thirsty to come to the waters. This should make you think of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4, where Jesus says to her "if you knew the gift of God and who it was that was saying to you give me a drink, you would've asked him and he would've given you living waters." So the imagery of living water, of pure water, to quench our thirst is another prefiguration of not just the feast of the Eucharist, where you use wine and water or bread and wine, but also of the water of baptism itself, the living water that's going to flow from the side of Christ crucified on Good Friday, but it's also going to flow in the waters of the baptismal font and quench the thirst of those who are looking for God, but they're looking for God

in things that aren't ever going to satisfy them. They are looking for God in the things of the world, laboring for that which doesn't satisfy, spending money on things which are not really bread, rather than coming to the living fount of water that will quench their thirst in the everlasting covenant that God's going to make through his Messiah. So that's a third water imagery, and then the fourth example of water imagery from the readings for the Easter vigil is the seventh and final Old Testament reading. This one is from the book of Ezekiel 36, and this one frequently will be read, especially if you have catechumens receiving the sacrament of baptism, because it's so explicitly a prophecy of baptism. This might be the most explicit prophecy of the sacrament of baptism in the Old Testament. It's Ezekiel 36. I just want to focus on the last few verses, it's verses 25 and following. Ezekiel is speaking about the age of salvation and he says these words, God says his words through Ezekiel verse 25:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Alright, so pause there. Notice, once again, what we have...the combined theme of water and spirit. Although in this case Ezekiel is speaking about a future age in which God is going to sprinkle clean water on his people in order to wash away their sins and then fill them with his spirit so that he will give them a new heart and they'll actually be able to keep his law. to be able to keep his commandments. This is building on the prophecy of Jeremiah, the prophecy of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 where Jeremiah says what's going to be new about the new covenant is precisely that God's going to write it not on tablets of stone like in the exodus, but he's going to write it in the human heart so that we will actually be given the grace to be able to fulfill the law, the grace to be able to keep the law. Ezekiel is saying that the way that's going to happen is through the sprinkling with water and the gift of the spirit. Well it doesn't take a sacramental theologian to figure out that this is going to be fulfilled in the sacramental rite of baptism, in which as Jesus says in John's Gospel, once again a person will be reborn through water and spirit, through

water and spirit which by the way, you might notice there too, this is really important for me in my own personal journey in understanding baptism; when God says I will sprinkle clean water upon you in verse 25, that is the biblical foundation for the ancient Christian and contemporary Catholic practice of sprinkling the water or pouring the water over the head of a person in the right of baptism as a viable and legitimate form of baptism. There are some Christians today who will deny sprinkling or pouring as legitimate and say that baptism always has to be by immersion; the person has to go all the way under the water or they're not truly validly baptized. Some Protestant ecclesial communities will have that view of baptism, but that view is erroneous because it doesn't take into account Old Testament prophecy. Ezekiel is very clear here that sprinkling will be a way that God can cleanse us of our sins and give us the new spirit of baptism. And, because of this passage, from earliest times like the *Didache*, which is usually dated to the First Century A.D., it's an ancient Christian writing, there have always been three forms of Christian baptism: immersion, which is a legitimate form a pouring of the water; and then you know a sprinkling of the water, which is the least possible use that you'll frequently find with infants for example. And, so this is the final prophecy of the sacrament of baptism. Why is it a reading for Easter vigil? Because of the great feast of baptism that's taking place, because of the great feast of Easter, which is the feast of the death and the resurrection of Christ into which we are being baptized.

And, if you have any doubts about that, you can just look at the second reading for the day — although it's really kind of the eighth reading. But, it's the reading from the New Testament which we usually refer to as the second reading. It's from Romans 6:3-11. Again, for the sake of time, I'm not going read the entire passage; I just want to read the first few verses and I want you to think about it in light of everything we've just heard from the readings on water and spirit and baptism in the Old Testament. It says this:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been unit-

ed with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Alright, pause there. Notice what Paul's doing here; he's describing baptism in a way that we usually don't think of it. I think, for me at least, most Catholics growing up today will think of baptism as an entry into the Church, which it is, or maybe even as a cleansing of sin, a cleansing of Original Sin in particular, which it is, but we don't tend to think of baptism as burial with Christ, as dying and being buried with Jesus, but that's what Paul's saying here when he says we were buried with Christ we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. He sees baptism as a kind of co-crucifixion, but also a co-burial with Jesus. Now this probably comes from the fact that Paul, like many of the first century Christians, are practicing immersion, so the idea of going under the water and then coming up out of the water is a very clear symbol of dying and then being buried and then coming up out of the ground, rising again. Even though we might lose some of that symbolism in sprinkling or pouring, it's still the meaning of the sacrament. So I want you to kind of think about that, that baptism is baptism into his death, which means I'm not just dying with him; I'm being buried with him; I'm being, in a sense, immersed with him, submerged with him into the waters of death so then I can rise out of those waters to newness of life. I don't know if you've ever seen anyone baptized by immersion, but if you get a chance to do so I would strongly encourage it. I've been to a few Easter vigils, for example, where they actually have a large baptismal font at the entry to the church that had enough water in it to immerse the adults that were receiving baptism for that service and its powerful. You really do experience sensibly the idea of dying and rising again, of going down into the water and coming up again, and that's what Paul's describing here with baptism, a kind of burial and rising to new life with Christ. And, that's really what's happening, the old person is passing away and behold a new creation, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians.

Okay, with that reading in mind we can now go to the gospel. So let's turn to the gospel for today, which is of course Mark's account of the resurrection in Mark 16:1-7. And, again, I just point this out, each year for the Easter vigil the Old Testament reading stays the same, the Psalm stays the same, the reading from Paul is the same, it's always Romans 6; but the gospel reading changes. In this case we get

Mark's account of the resurrection, which is the shortest of the three Synoptics and almost identical to Matthew's, but we'll read it anyway; it says this:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; -- it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you."

Alright, let's pause there now. There's so many things we could say about this with regard to the resurrection of Jesus. For our purposes here, I just want to highlight two elements. First, the reference to the Sabbath at the very beginning. So many Christians today when they hear the word Sabbath, they think about Sunday because Sunday is the traditional Christian day of rest. But that's not the case for the Jews, the Sabbath was Saturday. And, for the Jews also, a day would begin at sunset and not at midnight, but at sunset. So the Sabbath would begin on Friday evening at sundown and then end on Saturday evening at sundown. So the reason the women are coming to the tomb on Sunday morning is because the Jewish law obliged them to rest from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. So after Jesus is laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea on Friday afternoon right before the sun goes down, all the Jews then would have to rest Friday night; they would've had to rest and wait, and all Saturday even. If they wanted to go and anoint the body and prepare it and take a bit more care of it than they were able to on Friday with the rushed burial of Jesus, they wouldn't have been able to do it because it was forbidden because it was the Sabbath day of rest. And, then once the sun goes down on Saturday night, well then it's pitch black, it's dark. So what they do is they wait till first light on Sunday morning and what that leads to is them discovering the resurrection on the first day of the week; Mark uses that language the first day of the week. Now when you hear the word first day of the week you might think Sunday,

and that's right but when a Jew would hear the word the first day, they're going to go back to Genesis as well, because in the book of Genesis the first day of the week is the day of creation. Sunday is the day the world was made and Sunday is not just the day that Jesus is raised from the dead, it's also the day that the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters; it's also the day that through the power of his spirit and his word, God said let there be light. So on that very first day of creation we have God, we have the spirit, we have the word, a kind of anticipation of the Trinity, and we also have the creation of light, which points forward to the fact that in Mark 16 it's not just on Sunday that Christ is raised from the dead, but when did it happen? They went to the tomb when the sun had risen. In other words, at first light. So just as the light dawns on Sunday in Genesis 1 at the beginning of creation, so now they discover the truth of the resurrection at dawn on Easter Sunday morning. So there are these parallels with the book of Genesis, powerful, powerful parallels, and all of this leads into the liturgy of Easter vigil.

I want to close by looking at two elements from the living tradition of the Church that flow out of both the Old Testament readings and the New Testament readings for today. The first one is from one of my favorite early Church Fathers. This is St. Cyril of Jerusalem's book *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*. I highly recommend this book. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was the bishop of the church in Jerusalem. He was writing in the Fourth Century A.D. and at that point in the Fourth Century A.D. he gave lectures to converts to Christianity who are coming into the Church for the Easter vigil, and he was preparing them for the reception of the sacraments by explaining to them the biblical background of what they were experiencing: baptism, eucharist, and chrismation, or what we call confirmation in the West. And, in that he actually draws a parallel between their renunciation of Satan before receiving the sacrament of baptism and the overthrow of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus 15 that we just read for the Easter vigil. So let me read to you from the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem; this is what he said to Fourth Century Christians that just received the sacrament of baptism:

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.*²

It's from St. Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catechesis*, book one. It's an awesome parallel there because you see what he's doing; what he's saying is just like Pharaoh pursued the Israelites right up to the Red Sea but the cloud protected them from him and he was overthrown in the waters of the Red Sea, so now you've turned away from a life of sin, you've just renounced Satan in your vows before us all, but he's pursued you right up to the waters of the baptismal font, but in the waters of the baptismal font we're going to drown him, we're going to overthrow him so that you can enter into your new life, so that you can begin your journey to the heavenly promised land in this new exodus of the Christian life. It's just kind of an awesome parallel and I think it's really profound, especially since one of the things we do at the Easter vigil, all of us, is renew the vows of our baptism, which begins with saying I renounce Satan and all his evil works and all his empty promises. That renunciation of Satan is an important part of the entire Easter vigil and the Church sees that prefigured in the Israelite's delivery from the slavery to Pharaoh. It's a really powerful image

Finally I'll end with something more up to date. This is the actual words of the blessing of the baptismal water in the contemporary rite that the priest will say at the Easter vigil in the Catholic mass. So at Easter vigil there's a blessing of the baptismal water before the sacrament is performed and listen to the words of the priest; this is what he says:

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...

² *Mystagogical Catechesis* 1.2-3; trans. F. L. Cross

And at this point the priest lowers the Paschal candle, the Easter candle, into the water, either one 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.³

It's kind of an awesome prayer there once you know the biblical background. I think you could have called this video the Jewish roots of the Easter vigil because this is just the Church's way of reading Scripture; she sees the Old Testament prefiguring the new and the new fulfilled in the old, and it's not just the New Testament, it's the very sacraments themselves; it's the very liturgy that we celebrate. So just as the Israelites pass through the waters of the Red Sea in the Old Testament through the power of the spirit and the power of Moses, who is a prefiguration of Christ, so now Christ himself comes and in the Paschal candle, which symbolizes his cross, the union of the Paschal candle with the water and the Spirit is going to deliver the people of God even to this day. Every time someone is baptized that mystery is made new again; it's the mystery of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, through which the sacraments receive their power and which we celebrate on this great day, this feast of all feasts, the feast of Easter.

³ James Socias, *Daily Roman Missal*, pp. 500-501.