

Easter Vigil 2026

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

This is truly an amazing, an ineffable, night! What can be said, what can mere words convey to even begin to delve into the depth of the wonder and beauty of this night?

Let us take a moment, my beloved friends, let us take a moment to ponder in our hearts and collect our souls as we proceed to approach the depth and sanctity of this moment, in its glory and majesty.

We gather, as our Christian ancestors have gathered, for two millennia, to stand in awe of the most important event in the cosmos: Jesus risen from the tomb. Matthew, of course, wants to convey this cosmic significance to us: a great earthquake, the appearance of an angel like lightning and arrayed in snow white clothing, the guards overtaken with fear and dropping like dead men. An earth shaking and earth shattering event.

A cosmic event, and witnessed by two women, two faithful followers of Jesus, who in their grief had come to his tomb. The others, still struck down in their grief, still cowering in their fear, still immobilized by the terrible events of the betrayal, the cruelty and the brutality of the crucifixion, they remained behind, but these two brave women came and witnessed these extraordinary and amazing events. And these two women, in the midst of any terror or confusion they felt are the first to hear the unbelievable, the Good News, delivered by this heavenly messenger: “He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.”

In this Gospel account of Jesus’ resurrection, though, what strikes me is that not only is this an account of the most important event ever, but it also includes some very exact directives, instructions if you will, a guide, for what to do in the light of this resurrection. Matthew’s story of Jesus’ resurrection has five imperatives, twice the women are told, “Do not be afraid” and twice they are told to “go.”

“Do not be afraid.” These two courageous women had just witnessed events that left the hardened Temple police laying on the ground like dead men. Sure, “Do not be afraid.” The angel tells them is to trust God, to see into the depth of these amazing sights: here God is acting, acting in a new

way, God acting out of the depth of love to overcome the evil and violence done to Jesus. “Do not be afraid,” because God’s love is almighty and never failing. “Do not be afraid” because Jesus is raised by God’s almighty loving kindness. Now I’m not quite sure the angel’s command totally hits the mark, because we are told next that the women leave the tomb quickly in fear, but also with great joy, so ok, they’ve sort of got it. Then suddenly, they meet Jesus, they take hold of his feet, they worship him and once more they hear the command, “Do not be afraid.” Now, once again in the presence of Jesus, now they can truly trust God, worship God and praise for for this amazing sight. “Do not be afraid.”

“Go and tell” This command both from the angel and Jesus to the women is more understandable: as witnesses they now have a great responsibility to share this good news with others, to put this incredible good news, this cosmic event into words to let others know of the depth and power of God’s loving action, raising Jesus. “Go and tell,” be apostles to bring this message of God’s power to all, to show others how to trust God and to free them from their fears. “Go and tell.”

There is one more imperative here, a final fifth one if you were keeping count, and if you are still paying attention at this late hour, there is a final “go,” a “go” with which the women are told to command the disciples, commanding the disciples to go to Galilee, to go and see Jesus, to go as disciples without fear and looking to meet Jesus.

For you and me, my friends, now 2000 years later, we hear these same words, we hear the women’s witness of the events that night, most importantly we hear the commands given to the women and given to us as well: “Do not be afraid,” In a world at war, in Ukraine, Sudan and now the Middle East, be peacemakers and trust God in undertaking acts of kindness and mercy; “Do not be afraid,” in a world of economic chaos, remember the widows and orphans and help to relieve the least of these, “Do not be afraid,” and trust in God to give you the courage and faith of those women at the tomb. And then, “Go and tell,” just like those women, as we witness this resurrection now in faith, we too are called and have the responsibility to “go and tell,” even in these troubled times, amidst the confusion and chaos, we are called to “go and tell,” of the depth of God’s love in our our lives and for the life of the world, “Go and tell” this good news to all who need to hear it, and like St. Francis said, “Preach the Gospel at all times and use words if necessary!” And finally, perhaps the

most important, “Go” and look for Jesus, go into the world seeking the face of Christ in our neighbors, go out this night, the most Holy Night, knowing that in Christ’s resurrection God’s loving kindness now sets the course for our lives and for our world.

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