

The powerful liturgical drama of the Triduum reaches its high point at the Easter Vigil, the first Eucharist of Easter. This is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery – when Jesus Christ rose from the dead in the darkness of the tomb and broke the bonds of death forever. The Easter Vigil has four parts: The Service of Light; the Liturgy of the Word; the Liturgy of Baptism; and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Easter Vigil is **not** to be confused with the Watch of the Passion on Maundy Thursday!

At Northwold, prior to the beginning of the Easter Vigil, the crucifix is removed from the Easter Sepulchre and the veil is also removed to signify the empty tomb.

**The Service of the Light:** Easter Vigil begins outside the darkened church. The ‘new fire’ is kindled in silence and blessed, sprinkled with holy water and censed by the priest. The deacon or subdeacon holds the new Paschal Candle while the priest explains and traces the symbols before blessing and inserting the five incense nails representing the five wounds of Christ. The priest lights the Paschal Candle from the new fire, blesses and censes it, before handing it back to the deacon.

Servers hold tapers lit from the Paschal. The priest vests with the chasuble. A procession forms behind the thurifer and crucifer with the deacon or priest carrying the Paschal Candle, followed by the acolytes and congregation. The procession stops first just inside the entrance of the church where the deacon or priest intones *The Light of Christ* and the congregation responds *Thanks be to God*. The acolytes then assist the congregation to light their candles from the tapers lit from the Paschal Candle. The procession proceeds to the chancel stopping twice more while the versicle and response is intoned. The Paschal Candle is placed in its holder after the last response.

The Deacon or Priest then intones the ancient Paschal song of rejoicing called the **Exultet**. This hymn recounts God’s mighty acts and joins the old Exodus from slavery in Egypt with new ‘Exodus’ wrought for us through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The Paschal Candle is acknowledged as the ‘new pillar of fire’ – the light of Christ which brings salvation and peace to all.

**The Liturgy of the Word:** A series of Lessons follow proclaiming God’s creative

and saving acts throughout history. The readings end with a collect.

**The Proclamation:** The high point of the Easter Vigil follows.

The priest proclaims:

*Christ is risen! Alleluia!* And the congregation responds *He is risen indeed, Alleluia*. At the proclamation the church lights are switched on and bells are rung loudly to herald the resurrection. It is an unashamedly exuberant and dramatic liturgical moment as we rejoice in the resurrection of our Saviour. The congregation extinguishes their candles and the Gloria is sung followed by the Collect and the Epistle.

**Easter Sepulchre part II:**

During the Gradual Hymn at St Andrew’s Northwold, the thurifer, crucifer, acolytes and sacred ministers, followed by the congregation process to the Easter Sepulchre for the proclamation of the Easter Gospel. The Sepulchre containing the linen altar cloths, and the Book of the Gospels are censed. At the conclusion of the Gospel, the altar linens are removed from the Easter Sepulchre and carried in procession to the High Altar and laid upon

it in readiness for the coming of the Christ in the Breaking of the Bread.

### **The Liturgy of Baptism:**

Those adults prepared for Baptism during Lent – known as Catechumens – are traditionally baptised at the Easter Vigil according to the custom of the early Church. It is also the time when all the Baptised People of God renew their Baptismal vows. The altar party moves to the font, the Deacon carrying the Paschal Candle. The deacon leads the confession and the priest pronounces absolution. The Font and water is blessed. The Paschal Candle is dipped into the font three times and the water is mixed with the sacred oils of Catechumens and Chrism blessed by the Bishop on Maundy Thursday. Catechumens are then baptised.

If there are no Baptism Candidates, the congregation is invited to renew their Baptism vows. The acolytes light tapers from the Paschal Candle and assist the congregation in lighting their candles. All the Baptised present renew our vows. The priest then liberally sprinkles the congregation with the baptismal water mixed with the Holy Oils to seal the

renewal of vows before proclaiming the Greeting of Peace.

**The Liturgy of the Eucharist:** the Holy Eucharist now proceeds as normal.

On **Easter Day**, the symbols on the Paschal Candle are explained to the congregation before the priest proclaims:  
*Behold the light of Christ.*

The Liturgy of Baptism takes place after the sermon. In churches where there has been no Easter Vigil Eucharist the font and water is blessed as per the Vigil and candidates are baptised. If there is no baptism the congregation is invited to renew their baptism vows. Servers assist with the lighting of the congregation's tapers from the Paschal Candle. When the renewal of vows is complete, the congregation is sprinkled with the holy water. The Eucharist continues as normal with the Peace.

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