

Easter Vigil, Year C

- Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
- We are gathered here tonight, standing in awe, before an empty tomb
- The unimaginable has happened. Christ has died. Christ is risen.
- And we think back over the past few days that have led us to this moment.
- Christ at the Last Supper, washing the feet of his disciples.
- Christ on the cross, suffering for and with us, here in the depths.
- Christ in the tomb - God's Word gone silent.
- And now, here, proclaiming the risen Christ, the one who conquered even death and hell – for our sakes.
- And it is clear: love has brought us here.
- This is where that self-giving love of God ultimately leads: yes, first to service to others, and then perhaps even to suffering with others, being truly present with them
- But then, ultimately, here: to an empty tomb, death conquered, and abundant life offered.
- Love has brought us here.
- And so that's what we're here doing tonight: telling love stories.
- Because love has brought us here to where olive branches signify the end of the flood, to where God has promised to keep us in safety, never again to flood the world.
- So we tell a story of a love so enormous it has to be written in the heavens, in a brightly-colored bow in the sky.
- And love has brought us here to dry land on the far side of the Red Sea, set free from everything that sought to drag us down and keep us submerged.
- So we tell the story of a love so powerful it parted the waters, and allowed us to walk on the sea floor, dry as a bone.
- Love has brought us here, to where we are gathered from among the nations as God's chosen people, and washed us clean.
- And so we tell a story of a love so great it turned our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, and put the spirit of love in us to dwell.
- Love has brought us to the festival day where we rejoice with gladness just like the Lord does.
- And we tell the story of that love, so generous that in it we humble creatures are made whole, and glorified.
- Love has brought us to the font, and to the table, where we encounter the overwhelming

and incomprehensible love of God.

- So we tell the story of that love – a love so great that even when we are buried we can be sure that we will rise again, just as Love has this night.
- A love so great that because of its power we no longer live our lives in the valley of the shadow of death – but instead bask in the bright light of the Resurrection.
- It is love that has brought us here, to this night, “when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.”
- “How blessed is this night, when earth and heaven are joined and man is reconciled to God.”
- It is love that has brought us here, and it is love that will lead us, if we only let it.
- And so we tell the story of a love so great that it couldn’t be contained by a tomb, or a rock, or linen cloths – could not be restrained but rushed forth into the world, and continues to fill it ever more and ever more.