**Meeting the Triduum ("Three-Day Liturgy"): Easter Vigil**

How is the Easter Vigil similar or different to the Sunday Holy Eucharist service?

Similarities

- Four readings (Hebrew Scripture, New Testament, Gospel, and Psalm)
- Sermon
- Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

Differences

- Service begins outside with the lighting of the new fire, and the deacon leading the procession as they carry the newly lit Paschal Candle into the church
- Service begins in darkness with the chanting of the Exsultet (traditionally by the deacon) as all other worshippers candles are lit
- Service continues with a vigil during which we hear multiple readings from Genesis and continuing throughout the Hebrew Scriptures
- At the first "Alleluia," the lights are brought up and candles are extinguished. During the sung Gloria that follows, the people are sprinkled with holy water (Psalm 51:7) as a reminder of baptism (this practice is called "asperges").

How did this rite develop?

- Earliest documentation is from the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (Rome, 215 CE)
    - Candidates for baptism fast on Friday and Saturday; those who are ill or pregnant fast on Saturday only
    - Saturday night is spent in Vigil, listening to readings and instructions
    - At cockcrow, the baptismal water is blessed, a prayer of thanksgiving is said over the oil of baptism and a prayer of exorcism is said over the oil of exorcism.
    - Candidates renounce Satan, his servants, and his works, and are anointed with the oil of exorcism. Then they assent to a baptismal formula, the basis of the Apostles' Creed.
    - When they emerge from the water they are anointed with the oil of thanksgiving/baptism, then led to the assembly where the bishop prays over them with the laying on of hands and completes the anointing, signing each one on the forehead.

    - The newly baptized participate in the Prayers of the People, the Peace, and the Eucharist. They receive water (an internal baptism), milk and honey (babies' food, food of the Promised Land), and bread and wine.

Development in Sacramentary Liturgies

- Vigil begins with the blessing of the new fire and chanting the Exsultet.
- A series of four to twelve Hebrew Scripture readings followed, interspersed with prayers, canticles, and psalms.
- Readings typically included accounts of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, Isaiah 4 (Song of the Vineyard), Isaiah 55 (Come to the waters), the Valley of Dry Bones, and Jonah.
- After the three-fold renunciation and three-fold confession of faith, baptismal candidates were immersed and anointed.
- Gallican rites indicate that a ranking clergyman washed the feet of the newly baptized.
- In the Roman rite, the newly baptized were clothed in white garments which they would continue to wear for several days.
- As pressure grew to baptize infants within a short period after birth, the Easter Vigil was no longer the principal time for baptisms.

Key elements of the Sarum rite:

    - New fire was kindled, blessed, and sprinkled with holy water, incense was exorcised and blessed, and the new fire was censed.
    - A taper was lit from the new fire, and the procession moved into the church.
    - The deacon then sang the Exsultet, followed by the Sursum corda and the blessing of the candle.
    - After the deacon lit the Paschal Candle from the new fire, candle bearers lit the candles throughout the church.

What is theologically striking about the Easter Vigil?

- Waiting
- New life
- Our own lives as a part of salvation history