

Easter Even Ante-Communion 2025

Homily – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

St. Matthew 57.57-66



We began tonight's Liturgy by chanting three times...*"The Light of Christ"...**"Thanks be to God."* We heard parts of the hymn *Exultet*...an invitation to join with the heavenly Legion of Angels and Rejoice in Christ's victory over death.

We then pressed five grains of incense...representing the five wounds inflicted on Jesus' body...into the Paschal Candle and blessed it with Holy Water and Incense. We then lit the candles on the High Altar...decorated and ready for Christ's return. The church lights were then turned on...bringing light out of the darkness of Maundy Thursday Evening and Good Friday.

Our Liturgy this evening is called Ante-Communion or Liturgy of the Word. In the early Church, there was no Eucharist celebrated until late Saturday night with the Consecration and Administration of Holy Communion happening after Midnight. People who had praying and learning the faith for perhaps a year, received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism at the Easter Even Mass.

Tonight's Gospel begins with a wealthy man from Arimathea named Joseph asking Pilate for the body of Jesus, so it would not remain on the Cross during the Passover Festival. Who was Joseph? Luke describes him as a "good and just man" who was a follower of Jesus, but in secret, because he feared the authorities. He was a well-respected member of the Temple Council and would not consent to having Jesus killed without a proper trial in accordance with Jewish Law.

800 years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied the grave of the "Suffering Servant" (Jesus), would be that of a rich man. Joseph of Arimathea made Isaiah's prophecy come true when he had Jesus buried in his own new grave. John tells us a man named Nicodemus went with Joseph to place the body of Jesus in the grave. Nicodemus was the follower of Jesus who came to talk with him at night.

Joseph and Nicodemus and the women who had been at the grave must have wondered what was next as they went back to their own homes. Tonight we wait with hopeful expectation for what's next. We won't have to wait long. Tomorrow morning we're in for a surprise.

