

HOMILY FOR THE EASTER VIGIL

All of the readings tonight are an invitation to life. The first reading revealed that the very first thing God created was light which illuminated the water which would soon be divided and come under God's control. Any primary school student will tell you that for life to bloom, you need water and light.

It was through water that God led the Hebrew slaves to a new life of freedom. It was in the morning watch – the first break of light – that water and light defeated the deadly power of the slave masters of Egypt.

It was water which was offered by God in Isaiah's reading as a free gift – a gift of life. It was not of human value in that our wages could not afford it. The gift of life, based on water, was that, as Isaiah says, we 'see' ourselves as a witness to the peoples. That we 'see' ourselves as a new nation – a gathering of the people who have the life of God. Seeing needs light so, again, water and light bring life in Isaiah's reading.

The Apostle Paul speaks about baptism – the world of water. He goes on to say, "When we were baptised we went into the tomb with (Jesus)." We died with Christ.

The tomb is a place of darkness. To come out of the tomb is to come into the light. Water and light bring life.

The Gospel has some of the disciples in the tomb but, from that darkness, Jesus calls all the disciples to Galilee – a most significant body of water is there.

On this night of nights, the two main images are light and water. These are the signs of our Baptism and they reveal the invitation to new life.

When God first created, God was dealing with a great void – there was darkness and there was only water which covered everything. From that, God produced the world in which we live. When that world became corrupted – when it ceased to be the world God had intended – God's mercy was revealed. Death became the reason for us to look more closely to God because we saw God as our only hope. In looking to God, we saw the hope of eternal life in Jesus as he was created anew as the resurrected one.

With the original creation, God began with darkness and water. With re-creation, God begins with what God has already created and then, God adds the light of the world, Jesus Christ. Through his death and resurrection, the work of re-creation takes place.

Tonight, God re-creates three people, Fiona, Jade and Damien, through the waters of Baptism and the light of resurrection.

God has already re-created each and every one of us who are baptised.

Our re-creation begins at Baptism, as it began for the Hebrew people when they crossed through the Red Sea. Re-creation is to form us as a people of justice; a people for God's own purpose and; a holy nation which lives to embrace the world with love as God has embraced the world in Jesus Christ.

The Sacrament of Confirmation enlivens the spiritual gifts of Baptism when we turn to Jesus and let his life enlighten and flood into our being.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist with which we are fed nurtures us as the fruitful branches of the vine, receiving life from Jesus as we allow the body and blood of Christ to transform us.

For our elect tonight, they have said, “Yes,” to Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

For the rest of us, we will join with them once more, in saying, “Yes” to God’s gift of our becoming God’s holy nation – God’s new creation - bathed in water and light.