

I want to welcome everyone who is here tonight for the mother of all Masses: the Easter Vigil – and wish all of you a Happy Easter: Christ is Risen: Alleluia. Since we haven't said that word for a while – let's just say it again: Alleluia!

A special welcome to our guests who have come for our Catechumen: Richard Freeland. And our Candidates for full Communion: Jenny Banderis, Darlene Perez, Michael Whited, Jennifer Sanchez, and Angie and John Platt.

When you all started RCIA classes last fall – it probably seemed as if this night was a long time away- – and now we are here. So congratulations on your perseverance – and thank you for listening to the Lord calling you into our Catholic family.

When the lectionary was put together after the Second Vatican Council --- this book of scripture readings we use for the celebration of the Mass throughout the year --- those doing the work could have chosen any readings from the whole Bible to include in tonight's readings for the Easter Vigil. Why did they choose the ones they did?

I don't want to try to read their minds – but I think there is an important lesson to be learned in each of the readings chosen – and they kind of build on each other. . .1<sup>st</sup> in the wonderful reading from Genesis – which I'm sure you all know is the very first book of the Bible – In it we hear how God created everything in the world.

God created the light – and saw how good the light was.

God created the dry land and the seas – and God saw how good it was.

God created every kind of fruit tree on earth – and God saw how good it was.

God separated the light from the darkness, and created all the swimming creatures and the winged birds, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth – and God saw how good it was.

Then God created humans in his own image and likeness – and God found this to be not just good – but VERY good.

So first lesson: we are created in the image and likeness of God – and God knows we are special: God knows we are, each and every one of us: VERY GOOD!

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading from Exodus: God saw how his people were suffering in Egypt and so God led his people to freedom – even when the way seemed impossible – when the Israelites had the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's army behind them --- God made a way where there wasn't a way – God led, and continues to lead, his people.

So lesson two: never abandon hope! Entrust yourself to God and allow God to lead you – and even when the way seems impossible – God will make a way where there wasn't a way before. Why? Because God knows we are special: God knows we are, each and every one of us: VERY GOOD -- and so God will never abandon us, even if we abandon God --- God will never hang us out to dry!

3<sup>rd</sup> Reading: from the Prophet Isaiah – all you who are thirsty, come to the water. Listen to the Lord, and you will have life. Seek the Lord while God may be found.

So lesson 3: God has a plan for each one of us – and it is greater than anything we can ever image for ourselves: for God's thoughts are not our thoughts nor are our ways God's way. So open your ears and your hearts – and listen for the voice of the Lord who will continue to whisper his plans for you: Why?

Because God knows that we are special: God knows we are, each and every one of us: VERY GOOD – and so God will never abandon us – even if we abandon God: God will never hang us out to dry.

4<sup>th</sup> Reading: Paul's letter to the Romans: we who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death – so that just as Christ was raised from the dead – we, too, might live in newness of life.

Lesson 4: Death is not the end. Even though our lives on this earth will come to an end – death no longer has power over us. God's plan for us is quite literally – out of this world! God's plan for us lasts for all eternity! Why?

Because God knows that we are special: God knows we are, each and every one of us: VERY GOOD. And so God will never abandon us, even if we abandon God: God will never hang us out to dry. Because God has a plan for each one of us – and it is greater than anything we can ever image for ourselves.

And all of this is made possible because of our 5<sup>th</sup> reading: From the Gospel of St. Mark: Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. HE HAS BEEN RAISED: he is not here.

Today Christ breaks the bonds of sin and death. And so consequently, we must think of ourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. And so we must go and tell others this good news – making the kingdom of God present by our service to one another. . . experiencing the love of God in our lives by the love we show one another. . . allowing our actions to speak louder than our words: so people will come to know that God is present in their midst.

WHY?

All because God know that we are special: God knows we are, each and every one of us: VERY GOOD. . .

And so God will never abandon us, even if we abandon God: God will never hang us out to dry.

Because God has a plan for each one of us – and it is greater than anything we can ever image for ourselves. . .

God's plan for us is quite literally – out of this world! God's plan for us lasts for all eternity. . .

And all because Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified – has been raised – he is not here. And to this we say: Alleluia!