

A photograph of a field of wheat at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The wheat stalks are in the foreground, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

“I am the bread of life.”

Reflection

The Easter Vigil is the highpoint of our liturgical celebration as the completion of the triduum. This ceremony is full of light, love, joy, gladness, excitement, thanksgiving, rejoicing and remembering with thankful hearts all that Jesus achieved for us. We bring back the **alleluias** and songs of joy and gladness that what God promised has happened: **Jesus has risen from the dead** and overcome suffering, pain, trauma and death. It is during the Easter Vigil that the waters are blessed, signifying the waters of everlasting life that cleanse, rejuvenate and give new life. The **Paschal Candle** is lit and carried into the darkened Church as a sign of the light of Christ for the world, overcoming darkness and despair. During this celebration we hear many stories from our Scriptures that relate God's involvement in human history, culminating in the sending of God's Son into the world, human as we are, entrusted with the mission of announcing God's good news to the world. This is our family story and at the Easter Vigil we listen, we take it to heart and we continue to be amazed at God's great love for us, shown most profoundly in the life, mission and death of Jesus. The great good news is that, though Jesus was subjected to unspeakably brutal suffering and pain, God raised Jesus to life and because of that we are all able to be renewed in our faith, our hope and our love. The risen Lord is among us, continuing to call us to follow him more faithfully, sure in the knowledge of being loved and cherished.

The Easter Vigil is also the high-point in the journeying of our Catechumens who, at the Easter Vigil, were fully initiated into the Catholic community through the celebration of the sacraments of Initiation, namely, Baptism, Confirmation and first Communion. For all these people, the journey continues; they have come to faith in the risen Lord and their enthusiasm and gratitude for their faith is indeed heartening for the whole community. The Easter season is a time for all of us to give thanks to God, to reflect on all that has happened, and to take the deep meanings intended to provide us with the ways and means to live our lives full of Easter hope and joy.

We go forward as an **Easter people**, with every reason to be people of hope, joy and a sign of God's goodness to all we encounter.

Mystagogy

This is a strange-sounding name for a wonderful part of the RCIA journey, a time of post-Baptismal Catechesis. This stage of the Initiation process continues throughout the Easter festival of fifty days, and is a time for savouring and delving more deeply into the meaning of becoming initiated into the Catholic faith. Having had the experience of being baptised, confirmed and received first Communion at the Easter Vigil, our new Catholics continue to journey with us in exploring further the mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and what this means for us.

The gospel readings during the Easter season call all of us to look more deeply at what it means for us to be missionary disciples of Jesus in the world. The language of these stories and the imagery suggested by the gospel writers suggests close relationship with the Lord. When we are baptised, we are baptised into Christ and we receive a new life in Christ, as members of one body, as St. Paul teaches in his letters to the Christian communities.

Throughout the Easter days, we reflect on the story of the Good Shepherd, and recall Jesus' words: "I am the Good Shepherd: I know my sheep and they know me."

Again, in John's gospel, we hear Jesus say: "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener...Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine, and you are the branches." (John 15:1,4-5)

In both of these gospel stories, it is clear that union with Christ is at the heart of the matter: an entering into a deep personal relationship with the Lord. The call to the whole

community is to look with fresh eyes at these truths that we celebrate and call to mind each year. Our new Catholics provide us with opportunities to share our faith and to draw closer to one another and the Lord.

Jesus' words to Thomas provide us again with assurance that in remaining with, close to, and in harmony with the risen Lord, that we will never be lost or alone on our journey. Jesus said to Thomas: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6-7)



Easter is the great season of celebration of new life in all its forms. It is marked by joyous celebrations, a new energy and sense of well-being, renewed hope and the possibility of injecting the joy of the resurrection into our parish communities, particularly in times of challenge and difficulty, such as we have experienced during the past year, and even into an unknown future. Where Lent offered us an opportunity to journey with Jesus, to fast, pray and give alms, the Easter season calls us to continue our reflections, to pray the gospels and to renew our

commitment to follow the Lord within our communities, and with the world community in mind. This may be the time for more active engagement of all in the life of the parish as a contemporary expression of the reign of God, a time for inviting newcomers to our communities to become more deeply engaged with the worship and work of the parish.

How privileged we are, as Christians, to know ourselves loved and forgiven, to be offered the gift of peace and to feel empowered to be missionary disciples to our world. The call to all of us, individually and as communities, to remain close to the risen Lord, and out of that closeness to radiate Christ to the world.

Mass for New Catholics

Sunday, 22nd May 11.00 a.m. Mass
St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Adelaide

Archbishop Patrick O'Regan will be the principal celebrant and welcomes all new Catholics, received into the Church at the Easter Vigil, to come along to this Diocesan celebration. Families and parish RCIA coordinators and support people are welcomed to come along with you for this special celebration.



Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people; praise God who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light.'

234 The third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the sacraments, usually at the Easter Vigil, is followed by the final period, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes (the newly baptised) together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests should give them thoughtful and friendly help.

235 The neophytes are, as the term "mystagogy" suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received. For they have truly been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God's word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world.

236 Just as their new participation in the sacraments enlightens the neophytes' understanding of the Scriptures, so too it increases their contact with the rest of the faithful and has an impact on the experience of the community. As a result, interaction between the neophytes and the faithful is made easier and more beneficial. The period of postbaptismal catechesis is of great significance for both the neophytes and the rest of the faithful. Through it, the neophytes, with the help of their godparents, should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful. The faithful, in return, should derive from it a renewal of inspiration and of outlook.

237 Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season. Besides being occasions for the newly baptised to gather with the community and share in the mysteries, these celebrations include particularly suitable readings from the Lectionary, especially the readings for Year A. Even when Christian initiation has been celebrated outside the usual times, the texts for these Sunday Masses of the Easter season may be used.

238 All the neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for the neophytes and the entire local community should be invited to participate with them. Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents. The homily and, as circumstances suggest, the general intercessions should take into account the presence and needs of the neophytes.

239 To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis, some sort of celebration should be held at the end of Easter season near Pentecost Sunday; festivities in keeping with local custom may accompany the occasion.

240 On the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment.

241 To show his pastoral concern for these new members of the Church, the bishop, particularly if he was unable to preside at the sacraments of initiation himself, should arrange, if possible, to meet the recently baptised at least once in the year and to preside at a celebration of the Eucharist with them

Taken from: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

