

**Blazing Fire Session 1 RCIA**

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October 04, 2021

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The Easter Vigil is the "greatest and most noble of all solemnities, and it is to be unique in every single Church" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], n.d.). In her wisdom, it is no mistake that the Church elects to start this noblest of all solemnities with a "blazing fire." We Catholics have to ask what is so crucial about the symbolism of fire that The Church decided to begin the Easter Vigil relating this powerful symbol to our Lord Jesus Christ?

Let's start by diving into Bret Weinstein and Heather Heying's book, "A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolution and the Challenges of Modern Life," where Weinstein and Heying point out:

The campfire is a forge for ideas. A place to discuss berries, rivers, and fish. A place to share our experiences, to talk, to laugh, to cry, to deliberate over our challenges, and share our successes. From this forge emerge the kinds of ideas that render humans a true superspecies, one that surfs the rules of the universe, kicking up paradoxes in its wake (Heying & Weinstein, 2021, pp. 6–7).

What a brilliant insight into the power of gathering around a fire. In the case of the Church during the Easter Vigil, we do not discuss which berries to eat or fish patterns for catching the most fish; we do keep the memorial of celebrating the mystery of Jesus's triumph over death—passing this good news from one generation to the next allowing all who wish to know that eternal life has been won for each of us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The blazing fire we light at the beginning of the Easter Vigil is the source of protection, giving us the confidence we need to stand vigil in the darkness of the world. Fire has been used to "make light and create warmth, to increase the nutritional value of food, and to keep predators at bay" (Heying & Weinstein, 2021, p. 6). It wouldn't be prudent to list every applicable thing

fire does for humanity in this short essay. Still, the Catholic Church has insight into the relationship between Jesus and the blazing fire. Christ is our Light!

### **Christ our Light**

The connection between Jesus and light is an important metaphor used by the Church since the Apostles and early Church Fathers. What is the importance of understanding Jesus as the light? In this section, that question will be answered along with an understanding of the darkness covering the world desperately in need of Christ's light.

Adam and Eve were created in the likeness of God, and their nature, like God's nature, was perfect. The snake tricked Eve by telling her the lie, tricking her into eating the forbidden fruit, "God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil (Gn 3:5). The lie here is Adam and Eve were already like God. When they defied God by eating the forbidden fruit, they introduced sin and darkness into the world.

After realizing they defied God, Adam and Eve hid their shame by covering their necked bodies with fig leaves (Gn 3:7). When they heard the sound of the Lord, they hid from Him, not wanting to be seen. Adam finally answered the Lord's calls and said, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid" (Gn 3:10).

During Adam and Eve's lifetime, they endured suffering for introducing original sin. Their son Cane murdered their son Able. Sin and darkness ran rampant testing God, "When the Lord saw how great the wickedness of human beings was on earth, and however desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil, the Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and His heart was grieved" (Gn 6:5-6).

Clearly, the book of Genesis teaches us that humanity's sin separated us from our creator, and darkness filled the hearts of His creation. Humanity still sees the destruction of sin in our world today. With every child who starves or every innocent life taken, sin and darkness still wounder the world.

The Good News is Jesus Christ has risen! Like the blazing fire that cuts through the darkness, Jesus is the light that cuts through sin and suffering. The Cross won the victory, and Jesus is victorious. The victory is ours. All we have to do as believers in Christ is accept this triumphant truth.

### **Blazing Fire**

Returning to the metaphor of the blazing fire. What does a blazing fire do for us as individuals and as a people of God? First, a blazing fire cuts through darkness and sin. It gives us a clear path to righteousness so we may live a virtuous life in accordance with the Father's will. A blazing fire brings people closer together, so we gather as the people of God in the comfort of the fire free from the evil that prowls in the night. The first letter of St. Peter, chapter 5, reminds us:

Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings (8-9).

A blazing fire gives us the courage to move from warmer, comfortable places to colder, more unhospital places. Once you become baptized and fully initiated into the Church, you will be responsible for the great commission, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the

age" (Mt 28:19-20). You, too, will become a light to the world, bringing about the love of Christ to all who meet you.

Jesus is the light that brings truth in a confusing world. We must have Jesus, who gives us a worldview that reflects natural law, especially in this time when humanity no longer gathers around a campfire with the ones we love. Instead, we gather around phones, computers, and tablets, finding worth and truth in the clutter of the internet social media platforms we use, desiring positive feedback for our choices regardless of whether our choices are harmful to ourselves and the ones we love.

Heying and Weinstein point out, "the online world, though it holds promise, does not have the structures that made discussion around the hearth so valuable" (Heying & Weinstein, 2021, p. 209). We must remember to gather as believers in Christ to share the Good News that death and darkness have been defeated and eternal life is our gift from the God who created us and loves us. Is there a better way to gather than around a blazing fire? Not according to the Church during the Easter Vigil. The night the entire Church worldwide celebrates YOU joining the community of believers walking with us to eternal life.

### References

Heying, H., & Weinstein, B. (2021). *A hunter-gatherer's guide to the 21st century: Evolution and the challenges of modern life*. Portfolio.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (n.d.). *The roman missal and the easter vigil* | *usccb*. USCCB. Retrieved September 30, 2021, from <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/triduum/roman-missal-and-the-easter-vigil>