

# Holy Saturday Vigil of Easter

## March 31, 2018

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A happy and blessed Easter to everyone.

Tonight is filled with many sacred symbols that stir our senses: there is *the darkness* that lays its mantle over Earth; the *sacred fire* that radiates its light and heat; the *sacred waters* that flow throughout Earth and remind us of our baptism; the *smell of incense* and refrains of *Alleluia* ringing in our ears. Our senses are filled to overflowing this evening.

Tonight is one of the most symbolic liturgies of the year. It reminds us of God's slow hand at work throughout a 13 billion year evolutionary process of creation that is "good." Jesus is risen from the tomb and he joins the energy of the Cosmic Christ infused throughout creation. How can we keep from singing?

Given tonight's multiple rich readings, I want to focus briefly on Mark's Gospel. Here we are at dawn on Sunday morning. Once again, it is *the women* who are present, ready to anoint Jesus's body since they could not do it when they laid him to rest as the Sabbath was approaching. These same women had stood at the foot of his cross; they grieved all during the Sabbath. As soon as dawn broke they headed to the tomb. But they were concerned about the massive stone, the huge rock that stood in front of the entrance to the tomb and wondered how they were going to move this huge boulder. The rock saw them approaching and heard their complaints.

Now rocks and boulders that appear in our lives are often thought to be deterrents to what we want achieved. They are maligned as barriers, as stumbling blocks, as obstacles to obtaining our goals and outcomes. Yet granite is the very foundation of Earth; it provides us stability and is the solidness beneath our feet. Rocks ground us; they serve as anchors. They wear down gradually becoming soil only with the slow work of wind, rain and erosion. This boulder placed in front of Jesus' tomb allowed itself to be moved by strangers so as to protect the body of Jesus from wild dogs or marauders who could otherwise enter the tomb and do harm to Jesus' body.

Having observed the grief and numbness of Jesus' faithful disciples carrying Jesus into the open tomb, the rock trusted being disturbed and used by others. It allowed itself to be rolled in front of the tomb and stood as guard over the sacred, broken body of Jesus.

The rock was not surprised when the women came to the tomb at dawn. For it witnessed the recent unexpected arrival of a unknown mysterious man (maybe an angel?) who, just a few minutes earlier, with both extraordinary strength and gentleness, rolled it away from the tomb's opening. *And then the rock saw Jesus emerge.* It was astounded as this was not the same broken body that had been laid in the tomb. Jesus was transformed! As Jesus passed the boulder he put his hand on it and the rock felt vibrations like never before. Jesus thanked the rock for its strength that kept quiet watch with him, and protected him during his descent into darkness. The rock remained mute but was filled with joy at being of service and watched as Jesus set out on the road that led to Galilee.

So as the women approached the tomb the rock knew what awaited them. This stone, that was often rejected as it was too big to be a cornerstone, now had a purpose and story to tell as well. He heard the young man say to the women "Do not be amazed...he has risen and headed towards Galilee." The rock thought, "Of course they are amazed! How could one not be? *Even a stone* knows this is an amazing, stunning happening." And the rock kept all this hidden in its core as the women fled to find their friends to tell them what had happened.