

Year C*Easter *Great Vigil*2010*I Do
Rick Lawler

Good morning Saints of God!
What an odd crew we are.
Gathered just before the rising sun to praise the Son who was raised.

O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection.

Yesterday morning I had to get up very early to work. It was a sort of practice run for this morning. I let the dogs out and made a bowl of cereal. It was so mild out I ate my breakfast on the deck. The moon was up and a great glowing ring surrounded the moon and filled the sky. It was beautiful. It always begins with creation.

My warm bed.
My dog stretching out the words, "Go back to sleep."
Food for my body.
The cool, dark, morning.
The moon.
The perfect glowing moon.

I thought, of all things, the rule for determining the date of Easter. Right there on the deck. [Easter Day is always the Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21.](#)

There I was under the same moon which first greeted my Lord Jesus as he stepped into the resurrection.

For centuries we have gathered on this Sunday morning , this holy night,
we have lit the sacred fire,
we have lifted the Paschal Candle,
sung the Exsultet,
baptized our children,
and proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus.

Oh how I am growing to love the resurrection of Jesus.
It is for me new life,
forgiveness received,
hope fulfilled,
blessedness enjoyed.

It begins so gently,
a great numinous ring around the moon on the [Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21](#).
It begins in a church full of lovely, sleepy-eyed, open-hearted, lovers of Christ.
It begins in a growing child baptized into faith.
It begins in promises made and renewed.

Question Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?

Answer I do.

Question Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Answer I do.

Question Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

Answer I do.

I do. I do. I do.

It sounds like a wedding and it is. It is the marriage of the heart of us, each of us, all of us, to the heart of God which is Jesus.

Jesus our Savior,
Jesus our Lord,
Jesus the resurrected One.

So if anyone, ever, asks you, “Is Jesus your Lord and Savior?”

You say “Yes!”

If anyone ever asks you if you are born again you can say “YES!”

Yes I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior on Easter morning, April 4, 2010.”

And I accept him every Easter, and at every baptism, and in my own baptism.

And you don’t have to be shy or feel less than, or defined, by whoever is asking you the question whoever they are.

Whether they are on a street corner,

or in a dormitory,

or in a pulpit,

they are not better than you.

This is between you and Jesus and it’s happening. . . right now.

One of the many things God is raising from the dead in my life is the sense that I am a Christian.

I’m tired of apologizing in my mind to other kinds of dedicated Christians,

to wonderfully thoughtful atheists and clever intellectuals,

and to myself,

for being a Christian.

I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.
I do trust him.
I do promise to follow and obey him.
I mean it.
This morning.

I am a Christian and I will no more apologize for it.
At baptism this morning Vittoria was asked these questions , and so was I, and so were you.
Now I can live those promises with confidence.
That's what's different.
I don't have to apologize to anyone, anymore.
I can be joyful in my Christianity.

I don't have to be arrogant.
I don't have to assume I have all the answers.
I can learn from people of other faiths.
I can honor and serve them.
But I can also be surprised and delighted that I am a Christian,
that Jesus is my Savior,
that I have accepted him
and promised to follow him as my Lord.

I join the generations of my spiritual mothers and fathers who have willingly surrendered themselves into the hands and heart of God who raised Jesus from the dead.

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb. . .

Who came to the tomb?
My spiritual mothers. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women.

. . . taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

Who are these men?
Well dressed angels, messengers of God, beings of light and power, I don't know who they are!

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. . . But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹

The believing women, the slow-witted men are my family.

The amazement,
the astonishment,
the wonder,
are all my spiritual inheritance.

The poet Mary Oliver says,
My work is loving the world.
Standing still and learning to be astonished.

Finally two of my thick-headed fathers respond. **But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.**²

There you go Father Peter now you're on the right track.
Be amazed.
Be wondering.
Be open.
Go and see.
The Lord is doing a new thing,
a thing that has never happened before and will never happen again until some
Final Great Day.
The Lord has raised Jesus from the dead.

When I was a child I loved nature.
I loved streams and frogs.
I loved woods most of all and played in them with my dog Toby.

¹*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 24:1-11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 24:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

I remember a tree blown down in the woods which became my tree house. So when I finally read the story of the boy who ran away from home and lived in a hollowed out tree, I knew just how that felt.

As I grew I learned to love the super-natural, what is beyond nature. God and Jesus and the resurrection. And to me, that was just as exciting and real and felt.

Now it is time to love it all.
Be astonished by it all.
Be amazed at it all.

To unapologetically claim the trees and the moon and the ring around the moon as mine.

To loudly proclaim Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Mary's agile spirit. . . mine.

Peter's reluctant amazement. . . mine.

The cool morning. . . mine.

The dazzling angels. . . mine.

The resurrection. . . mine.

Jesus. . . my Lord.

My Savior.

It's time to believe.