

Did You Know? An Anglican Glossary

Easter Vigil



Above: Lighting the Paschal candle from the new fire.
Center: A Paschal candle
Below: passing along the light,



On this night a new fire is kindled, and the Paschal candle lighted from it. This takes place in the back of a darkened church (in lieu of “the porch”). Catechumens (converts) traditionally were baptized on Holy Saturday. The baptismal water is blessed either now, or after the Exultet in the Sanctuary. The Baptismal vows are renewed.

The Paschal candle is large and made of pure beeswax. It is decorated with a cross, the Greek letters Alpha and Omega (Christ “the first and the last”), five grains of incense representing the nails, and with the year. As it is carried through the church to its place in the sanctuary, the people light their candles from its flame and pass the light along.

Lumen Christi is chanted three times during the procession. The Exultet is sung, and all the lights go on in the church. The lessons are read, and the First Mass of Easter is celebrated.