

Great Vigil of Easter
April 11, 2020 (Easter Eve)
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Trinity Episcopal Church

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

Romans 6:3-11
Matthew 28:1-10

Church closed due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic: livestream only

The past several years, I've read John Chrysostom's well-known Easter Homily at the Great Vigil. It's become – at least for me – a highlight of the year.

If you've been here at Trinity, you'll probably remember how we preach it. I say "how WE preach it," because this is not a sermon I "deliver" to a quiescent crowd. No, it's performance art – and the congregation's role is what makes it. I've managed, to my great delight, to get you stomping your feet and joining in some jeering at the devil and announcing with me the Easter proclamation: "Christ is risen!"

Well, we can't do it that way this year.

But maybe we can hold on to something of the spirit of that homily.

A few years ago, I came across what was described as a "remix" of John Chrysostom's famous homily. It's intended to be a bit more "hip" than the old translation.

Our translation of the homily begins like this:

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful and radiant festival!

The updated translation begins like this:

Are you a fan of God?
Go on in to the backstage party – no pass required!

It's not as much fun as we typically have here on Easter Eve, but it's still more fun than a poke in the eye.

Anyhow, here's the whole remix of Chrysostom's Easter homily. Sit back and enjoy!



Are you a fan of God?
Go on in to the backstage party – no pass required!
Have you been working for the Lord?
Call it a day – time for a well-deserved celebration!

A hard day's work on an empty stomach?
Punch out—the Boss is taking us out for dinner!
If you've been clocked in since eight this morning—
by all means, come and eat.
If you didn't arrive at work til ten—
that's fine, meet us at the restaurant!
You only worked a half day after lunch?
No problem, you're still invited.
You've only been at work since three?
Don't worry about it—you come, too.
You showed up a half hour before closing?
Believe me, really, there's no reason you shouldn't join us.

That's how the Lord works: There are no privileges for seniority.
New hires get the same retirement package
as those who have been with the firm for years.
The perks flow freely to everyone—
the Lord is thrilled just to have you working for him.
And he rewards your intentions, not just your accomplishments.

So join the party, everyone—the Lord's joy is contagious!
First or last—the same bonus waits for all!
White collar or blue collar—mingle, rub elbows, dance together!
Whether you've been hard at work or you've been procrastinating—
you're welcome to the party either way.
Whether you fasted or forgot—it doesn't matter now, the buffet is spread.
Dig in—no one is allowed to leave hungry!
Eat your fill, everyone, at the banquet of faith.

Charge whatever you need to God's corporate account.
Don't worry about what you lack—the fullness of the kingdom has come among us.
Don't beat yourself up over your failings—forgiveness has leaped out of the tomb.
Don't be afraid of death—the death of our Savior has set us free.

He let the Grim Reaper take him—then splintered his scythe into pieces.
He plunged into the underworld—and wreaked havoc!
Hell swallowed him whole—and discovered it had eaten poison!
Isaiah put it nicely: "Poor Hell, what an unpleasant surprise
when he popped down to say hello!"

Hell is throwing a fit because it has received notice that it is being shut down.
Hell is blowing its top because it has become a laughingstock.
Hell is freaking out because its mortgage has been foreclosed.

Hell is going ballistic because it has been marked for demolition.
Hell is screaming mad because it is being hauled out of the building in handcuffs.

Hell grabbed what it thought was one more corpse—
and found itself in hand-to-hand combat with God.
Hell seized possession of earth—
and found itself face-to-face with an insurgency from heaven.
It took the bait, and failed to see the fishing line.

Where's that creepy knife of yours now, Grim Reaper?
And you, Hell—you called the race too soon!

Christ is risen—and you, Death, are entombed!
Christ is risen—and Hell's goons are knocked flat on their backs!
Christ is risen—and the angels are dancing in the streets!
Christ is risen—and life is walking out of prison!
Christ is risen—and all the graves are empty.
For Christ is only the first to rise;
his empty tomb is just the beginning of an abundant harvest.

Glory and power are his forever! Amen! ⁱ

ⁱ The Easter Sermon of St. John Chrysostom—“Remix” (An updated translation by Hugo Olaiz and John-Charles Duffy for The Episcopal Church of the Advocate) @ http://www.episcopalcafe.com/daily/liturgy/chrysotom_remixed.php.