

The Great Vigil of Easter
Eucharistic Propers
Cycle ABC RCL

Romans 6:3-11

Against his Gnostic opponents, Paul consistently interpreted Baptism in terms of the death of Jesus and presented it as the death of the believer to this present evil age. This interpretation accorded with Paul's beliefs about the end of the age, for if we have died with Christ (through Baptism), then we should also share in whatever resurrection Christ has and thereby be fit for the life of the new age.

Psalm 114

Our Prayer Book Psalter follows the Greek Bible (Septuagint) in making the *Halleluja* of Psalm 113:9 into the first word of Psalm 114. *Hymns* of praise ordinarily celebrate God's creation and providence. The present hymn, however, celebrates a historical event: God's saving of Israel from bondage in Egypt. It is for this reason that Psalms 114 is sung along with Psalm 113 just before the Passover meal in Jewish homes.

Matthew 28: 1-10 (Cycle A)

Although no Gospel describes the resurrection itself, Matthew's Gospel does recount the unsealing of the tomb by an angel. Jewish burials of the period in Jerusalem were in cysts cut into the walls of limestone caverns (either natural or artificial). On the anniversary of the death, after the body had decomposed, the skeleton would be disarticulated, placed in a bone-box (ossuary), and stored in the cave. Large stones often sealed the entrance rather than doors or gratings so as to contain the smell of decomposition. Only Matthew tells us that both Marys who visited the tomb actually saw the risen Jesus. John, however, tells us of Mary Magdalene's encounter with him in the garden.

Mark 16:1-8 (Cycle B)

Mark 16:8 is almost certainly the close of Mark's Gospel. Mark 16:9-20, the so-called "longer ending" was added in the second century CE as was the addition to verse 8 sometimes called the "shorter ending." Both were added because the enigmatic close of the Gospel, "for they were afraid" (Greek: *efobounto gar*) may have seemed too abrupt and too ambiguous for some of its readers. Nevertheless for Mark to end his Gospel on a note of uncertainty and anxiety is not at all uncharacteristic. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus' actions sow discomfort and misunderstanding even as they achieve the kingdom's goals. This last great sign of resurrection is received by Jesus' followers with even greater uncertainty than the rest of Jesus' acts

Luke 24:1-12 (Cycle C)

This writer has taken his account from Mark 16:1-8 but has altered Mark's story in some respects. Only Luke mentions specifically that the women did not find the body in the tomb (24:3), and only in Luke do the angels complain that the women should not be seeking the living among the dead (24:5). Most important is the omission of the information that the disciples will see Jesus next in the Galilee. (See Mark 16:7 and Matthew 28:7.) For the author of Luke-Acts it is Jerusalem, not the Galilee, which will be the scene of the resurrection appearances because it is from Jerusalem that this author sees the Christian mission setting out into the whole world.