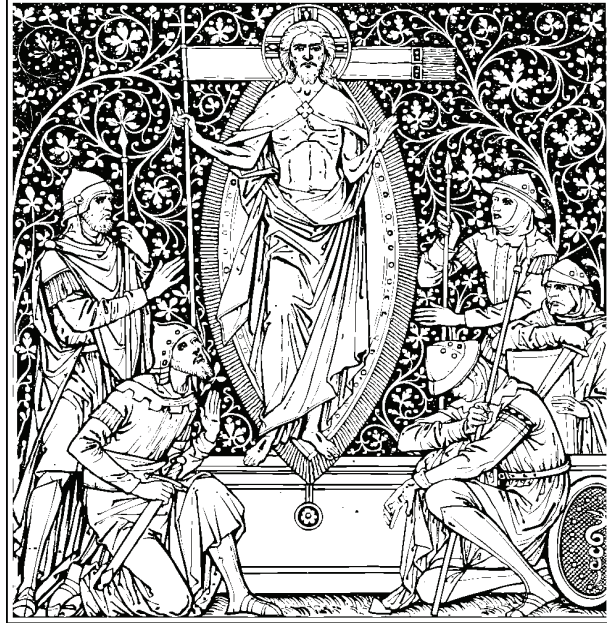


## HELPING YOUR DEACON, PREIST, OR CANTOR LEARN THE EASTER PROCLAMATION • EXSULTET

**L**EGEND HAS IT that Mozart would gladly have traded all his works if he could claim to have written the first line of the *Exsultet*. Even Wikipedia states, “Here the language of the liturgy rises to heights to which it is hard to find a parallel in Christian literature.”



But singing this can be intimidating! Six pages of endless notes and words? As singing the *Exsultet* is the rightful role of the Deacon, it may also be sung by a priest or a cantor. What if your deacon, priest, or cantor is not a professional musician? Here is an opportunity for music directors to work closely with them. Meanwhile, let’s break it down and “de-mystify” some of this as to better proclaim the mystery.

\* \* \*

**TO BEGIN • A PRACTICE VIDEO** sung by Fr. Jonathan Gaspar • You can see the words and music in this video:

- \* **YouTube** • Fr. Jonathan Gaspar “Exsultet”
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVwuc\\_CNswY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVwuc_CNswY)

\* \* \*

**SUNG ONLY ONCE A YEAR at the Easter Vigil**, the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) is found in the Roman Missal. It can also be downloaded here:  
<http://www.icelweb.org/musicfolder/openpdf.php?file=ExsultetLong.pdf>

Additionally, at the end of this document is a copy with some casual notes I wrote in the margins (with non-technical terms). They are referred often to in the following:

### **EXULT, LET THEM EXULT**

The first page, which evokes great rejoicing, consists of three “verses” or “psalm tones” (labeled in my notes) that are exactly identical in form. **Learn the first two and a half lines, and you have now learned nearly the entire first page!** Furthermore, the characteristic leap of a fifth, unique to this section, evokes the joyful fanfare of the trumpet—“...let the trumpet of salvation sound aloud our mighty King’s triumph!”

## INVOCATION OF GOD'S BLESSING

Next (in parenthesis, which is skipped if sung by a cantor—N.B. the rubrics on Pg. 1) the deacon or priest invokes the mercy of God so that he may worthily proclaim “this candle’s perfect praises.” This parallels the *Orate, Fratres* which prays that our efforts will be worthy and pleasing to God. Labeled in my notes as “V1A” and “V2A” it uses the same melodic elements of the previous three “verses.”

## THE NATURE OF A PREFACE

Have you ever sung the Preface? Have you heard it sung? Then the rest will sound very familiar! The next section is taken verbatim from the *Preface Dialogue*. It serves to introduce the main body of the proclamation, the “Praeconium Proper” which takes on the nature of a Preface. In fact it even begins “*It is truly right and just...*” Again, the parallels to the Liturgy of the Eucharist are unmistakable and point to heightened solemnity.

As such, this section uses the same melodic formula as a Preface. This Preface tone continues throughout the rest of the chant. Jumping off from “A”, the reciting tone is on “C”. There is an accent on “B”, which is frequently used as an alternate reciting tone. This sets up the characteristic cadence of the Preface tone. **Therefore, it may be helpful for non-musicians to think of “A” as a landing spot**—the chant’s strongest gravitational pull, along with “C” and “B” as additional points of gravity. (See my notes on page 2.)

I’ve marked what appear to be three “verses” or phrases. Quite remarkably, the third “verse”/phrase (page 3) describes Christ’s sacrifice as the Passover Feast—connecting the Old Covenant with the New: “*These then are the feasts of Passover, in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb, whose Blood anoints the doorposts of believers.*”

## THIS IS THE NIGHT

Halfway down page three, I’ve marked what I like to call the “Litany of *This is the Night.*” This is the night is referenced no fewer than *seven* times, often heightened with melismatic phrases. This emphasis is warranted, as this section conveys some of the most extraordinary implications of the *Exsultet*.

Again, the Old Covenant is connected with the New, from liberating Israel’s children from slavery in Egypt, to present day: “*This is the night that even now, throughout the world, sets Christian believers apart...from the gloom of sin, leading them to grace.....*” In this light of the present day, be especially mindful, that for Elect and Candidates of the Church, this indeed is the night of great importance in their lives!

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the *Exsultet* follows shortly: “*Our birth would have been no gain, had we not been redeemed.*” This leads to a dramatic admission of God’s mercy through Christ’s redeeming power with this *astounding* assertion:

*O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!*

## ACCEPT THIS CANDLE

As a bookend to the invocation to worthily “sing this candle’s perfect praises,” the *Exsultet* concludes with prayers that God may “*accept this candle, a solemn offering...this gift from your most Holy Church.*” In conclusion, there is a prayer for perseverance for the candle, that it may serve to “*overcome the darkness of this night*” and that “*this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star: The one Morning Star that never sets...*”

\* \* \*

**SOME FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:** Most every line is a gem. But while trying to concentrate on the notes, make sure you allow the boundless blessings of this text to supersede all that you communicate to the faithful. Here’s how:

- *Patience. Revel in the text and do not worry about mistakes. Make them and move right past them. Even the best of singers will make plenty of errors on this holiest of nights.*
- *Sing it a few times for the music director who should listen in various parts of the church for pacing and diction. Diction will be much more important than singing each note perfectly. If you feel your pacing is too slow, your diction over-enunciated, it is probably just right!*
- *Take the long view: The Easter Vigil comes around every year. You may have opportunity to sing this again in the future. It will get better and more comfortable each time. More importantly, the text will take hold hold of your heart for the rest of your life!*

It is an honor to sing this. Anyone who does will be indelibly changed in spirit. For those who listen, allow its breathless beauty to steal your heart!

*Soli Deo Gloria*

\* \* \*

*If anyone has questions or might even like to meet to sing through the *Exsultet*, email me at [richard.clark@rcab.org](mailto:richard.clark@rcab.org).*

*Richard J. Clark  
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# THE PASCHAL PROCLAMATION

## Longer form of the Paschal Proclamation

The Deacon, after incensing the book and the candle, proclaims the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) at the ambo or at a lectern, with all standing and holding lighted candles in their hands.

The Easter Proclamation may be made, in the absence of a Deacon, by the Priest himself or by another concelebrating Priest. If, however, because of necessity, a lay cantor sings the Proclamation, the words Therefore, dearest friends up to the end of the invitation are omitted, along with the greeting The Lord be with you.

The Proclamation may also be sung in the shorter form.

Ex-ult, let them ex-ult, the hosts of heav-en, ex-ult, let Angel  
minis - ters of God ex-ult, let the trum-pet of sal-va-tion sound  
a-loud our might-y King's tri-umph! Be glad, let earth be glad, as  
glo-ry floods her, a-blaze with light from her e - ter-nal King,  
let all cor-ners of the earth be glad, know-ing an end to gloom and  
dark-ness. Re-joice, let Mother Church al-so re-joice, arrayed with  
the lightning of his glo-ry, let this ho-ly build-ing shake with joy,  
filled with the might-y voic-es of the peo-ples. (There-fore,

dearest friends, standing in the awe-some glo-ry of this ho-ly light,  
 in-voke with me, I ask you, the mer-cy of God al-might-y,  
 that he, who has been pleased to number me, though un-wor-thy,  
 a - mong the Le-vites, may pour into me his light un-shad-owed,  
 that I may sing this can-dle's per-fect prais-es.)

*Pause*

*Preface Dialogue*

(V. The Lord be with you. R. And with your spir-it.)  
 V. Lift up your hearts. R. We lift them up to the Lord.  
 V. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. R. It is right and just.

*"Preface"*

It is truly right and just, with ardent love of mind and heart and  
 with devoted service of our voice, to acclaim our God in-vis-i-ble,  
 the al - mighty Fa-ther, and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his

A - endoral / "landing" - tone  
 C - Reciting tone 2.  
 B - Alternate Reciting tone } always brought back to "A"

Concluding phrase

On-ly Be-got-ten. <sup>v.2.</sup> Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the e-  
-ter-nal Fa-ther, and, pouring out his own dear Blood, wiped clean  
the re-cord of our an-cient sin-ful-ness. <sup>v.3.</sup> These then are the feasts  
of Pass-o-ver, in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb,  
whose Blood anoints the door - posts of be-liev-ers. This is the  
night, when once you led our fore-bears, Is-ra-el's chil-dren,  
from slaver-y in E-gypt and made them pass dry - shod through  
the Red Sea. <sup>2.</sup> This is the night that with a pil-lar of fire  
banished the dark-ness of sin. <sup>3.</sup> This is the night that even now,  
throughout the world, sets Christian believers apart from world-ly  
vic-es and from the gloom of sin, lead-ing them to grace and

Connect Passover to Redemption

"Liturgy"  
of this  
is the  
night

4.

join-ing them to his ho-ly ones. This is the night, when

Christ broke the prison - bars of death and rose vic-to-ri - ous

from the un-der-world. Our birth would have been no gain,

had we not been re-deemed. O wonder of your hum-ble care

for us! O love, O char-i-ty be - yond all tell-ing, to ran - som

a slave you gave a-way your Son! \* O tru-ly nec-es-sar-y sin of

Ad-am, de - stroyed com-plete-ly by the Death of Christ! O

hap-py fault that earned so great, so glo-ri - ous a Re-deem-er! \*

5. O truly bless-ed night, wor-thy alone to know the time and

hour when Christ rose from the un-der-world! This is the night

6.

of which it is writ-ten: The night shall be as bright as day,

4.

7.

dazzling is the night for me, and full of glad-ness. The sanctifying  
 power of this night dis-pels wick-ed-ness, washes faults a-way,  
 re-stores innocence to the fall-en, and joy to mourn-ers, drives  
 out ha-tred, fos-ters con-cord, and brings down the might-y.

*Pause*

*Candle*

On this, your night of grace, O ho-ly Fa-ther, accept this candle, a  
 sol-ern of-fer-ing, the work of bees and of your serv-ants' hands,  
 an evening sacri - fice of praise, this gift from your most ho-ly  
 Church. But now we know the praises of this pil-lar, which glow-  
 -ing fire ig - nites for God's hon-or, a fire into many flames  
 di-vid-ed, yet nev-er dimmed by shar - ing of its light, for it is  
 fed by melt-ing wax, drawn out by moth-er bees to build a torch



so pre-cious. \* O truly bless-ed night, \* when things of heaven  
 are wed to those of earth, and di - vine to the hu-man. \* *Pause*

*Candle*  
 There-fore, O Lord, we pray you that this candle, hallowed to the  
 honor of your name, may perse - vere un-dimmed, to overcome  
 the dark - ness of this night. Re-ceive it as a pleas-ing fra-grance,  
 and let it min-gle with the lights of heav-en. May this flame  
*Morning Star*  
 be found still burn - ing by the Morn-ing Star: the one Morning  
 Star who nev-er sets, Christ your Son, who, coming back from  
 death's do-main, has shed his peaceful light on hu-man-i-ty, and  
 lives and reigns for ev - er and ev - er. **R.** A - men.

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