

My homily for this year's Easter Vigil focused on the topics of death and life. We are used to thinking of the natural pattern of death following in the footsteps of life, as we see reality of physical life followed by physical death. But at Easter we celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ has broken and remade this pattern. For him life followed death, as his cruel death on the cross was followed by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ is not the only who gets to experience this reversal of the natural order. We see this in the New Testament epistle reading for the Easter Vigil. This reading is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans and in part it reads:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. (Romans 6:3-:5)

All who are baptized into Christ Jesus enter into a death which is followed by resurrection and life.

As I talked about the reality of death followed by life the point I tried to make in my homily at the Easter Vigil was that all of us will die *twice*. Of course all of us will experience physical death, the death of our mortal bodies. But all of us will also die a second time. When it comes to our second death there are two possibilities, one of which we very much want to avoid and one of which we very much want to receive.

There is what can be called eternal death. All human beings are created to live forever, but some will do this separated from God and from all that is good and holy (see Matthew 25:31-:46 and Luke 16:19-:31). This eternal death is something we want to avoid at all costs.

There is another option when it comes to our second death. We can die to self and die to sin so that we might live united to Christ (Galatians 2:19-:20) for all eternity.

The greatest and wisest thing we can do is die to self before we face physical death, so that by doing so we might avoid facing eternal death after the death of our bodies.

Because I did not use a written text or notes when I delivered this homily a full version of it is not available online. I hope this summary is helpful. Additionally, this homily is essentially a summary of a lengthier talk on Christ's death and resurrection which I have given on several occasions. A copy of the notes I've used to deliver this talk, entitled "Our Sharing in the Dying and Rising of Jesus Christ", can be found by following this link: <http://www.sspeterandpaul.net/giftsoffinestwheat.htm>.