

Easter SONRise Service:

North Shore Lake Erie – Pardoville – Sunday April 20, 2025 @ 6 am

Welcome:

Opening Prayer:

Eric: O God, you have searched the depths we cannot know, and touched what we cannot bear to name; may we so wait, enclosed in your darkness, that we are ready to encounter the terror of the dawn, with Jesus Christ.

People: Amen.

Lighting the New Fire:

People: This is the dawn of a new creation; come to the new fire.

Hymn: “Were You There”

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Readers:

Reader 1: The sun was in the water before Peter noticed it - a circle of gold on the surface of the sea. A fisherman is usually the first to spot the sun rising over the hills. It means his night of labor is finally over. But not for this fisherman. Though the light reflected on the lake, the darkness lingered in Peter's heart. The nets at his feet were empty, but Peter wasn't thinking about that.

His thoughts were far from the Sea of Galilee. His mind was in Jerusalem, reliving an anguished night.

Reader 2: As the boat rocked, his memories raced: the clanking of the Temple guards, the flash of a sword and a wounded servant, a healing touch by Jesus, a rebuke for Peter, soldiers leading Jesus away. "What was I thinking?" Peter mumbled to himself as he stared at the bottom of the boat. Why did I run? Peter had run; he had turned his back on his dearest friend & ran. We don't know where.

Reader 3: He had bragged, "Everyone else may stumble . . . but I will not" (Matthew 26:33). Yet he did. Peter did what he swore he wouldn't do. "Everyone else may stumble . . . but I will not. Everyone else . . . But. . ." A war waged within him. At that moment the instinct to survive clashed with his allegiance to Christ, and for just a moment allegiance won. Peter stood and stepped out of hiding and followed them till he saw the torch-lit crowd in the courtyard of Caiaphas.

Reader 4: He stopped near a fire and warmed his hands. The night had been cold. The fire was hot. "Peter followed at a distance" (Luke 22:54). He was loyal . . . from a distance. The problem was, Peter was seen. Other people near the fire recognized him. "You were with him," they had challenged, "You were with the Nazarene." Three times people said it, and each time Peter denied it. Yet Jesus knows the hearts of all people even that Peter would deny him three times.

Reader 5: How do we know Jesus knew? Because of what He did, "Then the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (Luke 22:61). When the rooster crowed, Jesus turned. His eyes searched for Peter and they found him. Peter would never forget that look. Though Jesus' face was already bloody and bruised, his eyes were firm and focused. They were a scalpel, laying bare Peter's heart. And now, days later on the Sea of Galilee, it wasn't the resurrection that occupied his thoughts. It wasn't the empty tomb. It wasn't the defeat of death. It was the eyes of Jesus seeing his failure. This wasn't the first night Peter had spent of the Sea of Galilee. After all, he was a fisherman. He, like the others, worked at night. He knew the fish would feed near the surface during the cool of the night and return to the deep during the day.

Reader 6: No, this wasn't the first night Peter had spent on the Sea of Galilee. Nor was it the first night he had caught nothing. There was that time three years before . . . Most mornings, Peter and his partners would sell their fish, repair their nets, and head home to rest with a bag of money and a feeling of satisfaction. This particular morning there were no fish, no money and no satisfaction. They had worked all through the night but had nothing to show for it except weary backs and worn nets. And, what's worse, everyone knew it. Every morning the shore would become a market as the villagers came to buy their fish, but that day there were no fish.

Reader 7: Jesus was there that morning, teaching. As the people pressed there was little room for Him to stand, so He asked Peter if his boat could be a platform. Peter agreed.

Reader 8: Peter listens as Jesus teaches. When Jesus finishes with the crowd, He turns to Peter. He has another request. He wants to go fishing. "Take the boat into deep water, and put your nets in the water to catch some fish". Peter groans. The last thing he wants to do is fish. The sun

is up & he is tired. It's time to go home. Besides, everyone is watching. They've already seen him come back empty-handed once. So Peter speaks, "Master, we worked hard all night trying to catch fish".

Reader 9: "All night." The sky had gone from burnt orange to mid-night black to morning gold. The hours had passed as slowly as the fleets of clouds before the moon. The fishermen's conversation had stilled and their shoulders ached. While the village slept, the men worked. All . . . night . . . long.

Reader 10: "Trying to catch fish." The night's events had been rhythmic: net swung and tossed high till it spread itself against the sky. Then wait. Let it sink. Pull it in. Do it again. Throw. Pull. Throw. Pull. Every toss had been a prayer. But every drag of the net had come back empty. For 12 hours they'd fished. And now . . . now Jesus is wanting to fish some more? And not just off the shore, but in the deep? Peter sees his friends shrug their shoulders. He looks at the people on the beach watching him. He doesn't know what to do.

Reader 11: Common sense said it was a time to get out. Logic said cut your losses and go home. Experience said pack it up and get some rest. But Jesus said, "Try it again." The most difficult journey is going back to the place where you failed. Jesus knows that. That's why He volunteers to go with them. "The first outing was solo; this time I'll be with you. Try it again, this time with me on board." And Peter reluctantly agrees to try again. "But because you say so I will". It didn't make any sense, but he'd been around Jesus enough to know that His presence made a difference.

Reader 12: So the oars dip again and the boat goes out. The anchor is set and the nets fly once more. Peter watches as the net sinks, and he waits until the net spreads as far as his rope allows. The fishermen are quiet. Peter is quiet. Jesus is quiet. Suddenly the rope yanks. The net, heavy with fish, almost pulls Peter overboard.

Reader 13: "John, James!" he yells. "Come quick!" Soon the boats are so full of fish that the port side rim dips close to the surface. Peter, ankle deep in flopping fish, turns to look at Jesus, only to find that Jesus is looking at him. That's when he realizes who Jesus is. What an odd place to meet God - on a fishing boat on a small sea in a remote country! But such is the practice of the God who comes into our world. Such is the encounter experienced by those who are willing to try again . . . with Him.

Reader 14: Peter's life was never again the same after that catch. He had turned his back on the sea to follow the Messiah. He had left the boats thinking he'd never return. But now he's back. Full circle. Same sea. Same boat. Maybe even the same spot.

Reader 15: But this isn't the same Peter. Three years of living with the Messiah have changed him. He's seen too much - cripples walking, empty graves - too many hours hearing His words. He's not the same Peter. Why did he return? What brought him back to Galilee after the

crucifixion? Despair? Some think so - I don't. Hope dies hard for a man who has known Jesus. I think that's what brought Peter back. Hope. A bizarre hope that on the sea where he knew Him first, he would know Him again.

Reader 16: So Peter is in the boat, on the lake. Once again he's fished all night. Once again the sea has surrendered nothing. His thoughts are interrupted by a shout from the shore. "Catch any fish?" Peter and James look up. "No!" they yell. "Try the other side of the boat!" the voice yells back. John looks at Peter. Why not? So out flies the net. Peter wraps the rope around his wrist to wait.

Reader 17: But there was no wait. The rope pulls taut and the net catches. Peter sets his weight against the side of the boat and begins to bring in the net; reaching down, pulling up, reaching down, pulling up. He's so intense with the task, he misses the message. John doesn't. This has happened before. The long night. The empty net. The call to cast again. Fish flapping on the floor of the boat.

Reader 18: Wait a minute. John lifts his eyes to the man on the shore. "It's Jesus," he says. Then louder, "It's the Lord, Peter. It's the Lord!" Peter turns and looks. Jesus has come. Not just Jesus the teacher, but Jesus the death-defeater, Jesus the King . . . Jesus the victor over darkness, Jesus the God of heaven and earth is on the shore . . . and He's building a fire. Peter plunges into the water, swims to the shore, and stumbles out wet and shivering to stand in front of the friend he denied. Jesus has prepared a bed of coals. Both are aware of the last time Peter had stood near a fire. Then, Peter had failed God, but now God had come to him.

Reader 19: For one of the few times in his life, Peter is silent. The moment is too holy for words. God is offering breakfast to the friend who denied Him. And Peter is once again finding grace at Galilee.

Reader 20: What do you say at a moment such as this? It's just you and God. You and God both know what you did. And neither one of you is proud of it. What do you do? You might consider doing what Peter did. Stand in God's presence. Stand still and wait. Sometimes that's all a soul can do. Too repentant to speak, but too hopeful to leave - we just stand. Stand amazed. He has come back. He invites you to try again. This time, with Him.

Moment of Silent Reflection:

Hymn: "Because He Lives"

God sent his son, they called him Jesus
He came to love heal and forgive
He lived and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove
My savior lives

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives, All fear is gone
Because I know, He holds the future
And life is worth the living, Just because he lives*

How sweet to hold a new born baby
And feel the pride and joy he gives
But greater still the calm assurance
This child can face uncertain days
Because he lives

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives, All fear is gone
Because I know, He holds the future
And life is worth the living, Just because he lives*

And then one day, I'll cross the river
And I'll fight life's final war with pain
And then as death gives way to victory
I'll see the lights of glory
And I'll know He lives

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives, All fear is gone
Because I know, He holds the future
And life is worth the living, Just because he lives*

Closing Prayer:

Eric: Merciful and loving God, we come into your presence today hoping in some way to touch you, to see for ourselves the truth of your resurrection.

People: Gather up our lingering fears and confusion, meet our doubts with compassion and understanding.

Eric: Open our eyes to your love and grace surrounding us.

People: Open our ears to hear you calling us to new challenges.

Eric: Open our imaginations to new possibilities.

People: Come anew to all who have been unable to believe; come anew to all who have known you but turned away from you.

Eric: Help us to experience you standing in our midst, saying, "Peace, peace."

People: May our broken world and our broken lives be transformed in your image.

Eric: We offer woundedness and turn to you for healing and newness of life, for you, O God, are our strength, our hope, and our salvation.

People: Amen.

Blessing:

Eric: Risen with Christ, may we know the reassurance of God's presence.

People: Risen with Christ, may we accept the challenge to work in God's way.

Eric: Risen with Christ, may we be living proof that God's love will never die.

All: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!