



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for the Easter Vigil (4th April) 2026

Probably, from my vantage point standing at the Lectern to sing the *Exsultet*, I get the best view of the ceremony of light at the beginning of this Liturgy. I see what you, standing amidst the action, do not see: the twinkling flames held by the congregation - points of light in the darkness.

Lighting the candles is not always as expeditious an exercise as we might wish: the wicks seem to resist our attempts to set them on fire; and as we move or drafts of air blow through the church, they flicker in the darkness, teetering between light and extinguishment.

In what is an unintended way, they thus provide a more profound sign of the truth which they symbolise than we might realise as we struggle to keep them burning.

Taking the light from the Paschal Candle and sharing it around the community of the Baptized, signifies the spread of Faith in the risen Christ. The light of hope, which was ignited in this world at the Resurrection of Jesus, is carried in the lives of all those who have heard and embraced the truth of this Gospel - this Good News from God.

Yet, just as the flames flicker and sometimes go out, so also our Faith as the currents of life in this world swirl around us. The impulse with the candle is to cup our hand around its light to protect it from the disturbance; and we can do much the same with our Faith - trying to inure it to the pressures and influences of the world.

However, as Jesus mentions somewhere in the Gospels, you do not light a lamp to put it under a tub: a candle, the light of which cannot be seen, is a rather pointless thing; and likewise with Faith, which is protected from encounter with the hard realities of life. To realise its purpose, Faith needs to engage with the challenges of life in this world so that Jesus might be seen and His Gospel heard.

To be sure, in the process, our faith might waver and, maybe, sometimes even go out for a while as sometimes we struggle to find the intellectual path towards the reconciliation of revealed Truth with the realities of our experience. However, this evening we recognise and celebrate the fact that the Light Which is Christ, of which our candles - and indeed we - are mere symbols and reflexions, can never be extinguished, for in rising from the dead, He has trampled down death for ever.