

## **EASTER VIGIL 2018**

“Rise and Shine” is the unofficial anthem of the Pilgrimage Trust which gathers annually in Lourdes from Holy Saturday for its Easter Week Pilgrimage. It will be sung with gusto by several thousand young people, including around a thousand children with special needs, their enthusiasm and hand actions indicating their Easter joy. Long-term helpers may have heard the chorus of “Give God the Glory, Glory” many times before, but still draw energy from the joy of the young people.

Tonight’s Gospel is set at dawn by the tomb where Jesus has been buried. Three women expecting to anoint the body find the stone rolled back and the tomb empty. Mark’s story invites us to stand where those first witnesses stood. Those three women didn’t see Jesus. Neither do we. They didn’t hear Jesus call their names. Neither have we. Yet the message heard is the heart of the Easter proclamation then and now: “He has risen, he is not here.”

This night, communities all over the world will gather in darkness, and in that darkness a fire is lit and the flame shared. Then a song of exultation is sung, proclaiming that Christ is the light of this night. Our celebration this night, and our anticipation of celebrating the gifts of life and the Christian community, can bring immense peace and joy, powerful freedom and vitality to our lives. We can walk each day in God’s grace and live in love and hope. Let us proclaim with enthusiasm, “Rise and Shine”.

*Risen Christ, when darkness overwhelms us may your dawn beckon, when fear paralyses us may your touch release us, when grief torments us may your peace enfold us, when courage leaves us may your spirit inspire us. And when death threatens may your resurrection light give us hope. Amen*