

I don't know about you, but I don't usually stay up this late. If I'm up this late it's got to be for a really good reason. It's got to be a night that whatever is going on is so good that I wish it would never end. You get those nights sometimes with someone you love or an experience that sweeps you away. It takes a while to let the magic of a night like that go to work on us, and once it does it takes a while to let it go. The Easter Vigil aims to be one of those nights. It takes a while to realize how significant this night is, but once we do, we wish it would never end.

The last time I stayed up this late was a couple Monday nights ago. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was giving away some awards. Every year I watch the telecast with a few friends. In fact we have a contest. We pass around ballots before Oscar night and everybody marks down what they think will win--all 22 categories from Best Picture to Best Animated Short Subject. The one with the most correct answers wins. I've only won once.

Oscar night keeps me up way past my bedtime, but this year I especially found it worthwhile to wait for the end. James Cameron came to the podium to accept for best director and best picture. In case you've been living in a cave the last few months, best picture was *Titanic* this year. I don't want to spoil the ending for you, but a lot of people die.

We laugh, but of course the loss of that ship was serious business. Cameron realized the same thing, so before he let everybody go party that night, he asked people to remember the lives that were lost. He asked that auditorium filled with Hollywood's bright stars and technical wizards, together with however many billions were tuned in on TV sets, to observe a few moments of silence in remembrance of those who had died. Cameron also interpreted the movie. He said its message was "Live for today, since you don't know what the future holds."

Making the Oscar a kind of "Vigil", and himself a kind of "reverend", Cameron invited his audience to a spiritual experience and gave them a philosophy of life. But make no mistake about it; Christianity offers more. We remember the dead, but we also pray aloud for their redemption. We can live for today, but we can also live for tomorrow, even if we're not going to be here. Easter offers a new meaning to death, and a deeper philosophy of life. Easter removes the fear of death because it invites us not to live selfishly for today, but to live for Christ. Once we live for Christ we begin a day that we hope will never end.