

When *The Ten Commandments* came on TV last week I was reminded of some people who saw the movie when it first came out. They were thrilled with it and ran to ask their pastor, "Have you seen the movie?" He replied, "No, but I read the book."

On passover night, when Moses won freedom from Pharaoh, Israel crossed the Red Sea. Moses stretched out his arms and the waters parted, standing like walls left and right; then, as Pharaoh pursued, Moses stretched out his arms again, and the same waters swallowed up the enemy. When Christians are baptized we come to the water like Israel to the Red Sea. We leave behind a former way of life, a life without Christ, and we enter a promised land of God's love. The waters of baptism submerge the former life, the enemies which kept us from Christ. We come to the Easter Vigil on this passover night to renew our baptismal vows and to touch holy water again. The hardest part for us is what I suspect was hardest for Moses: ordering the water to close in on the enemy, saying goodbye to a former way of life.

If the Easter Vigil is to help us pass from slavery to freedom, we have to submerge what kept us in bondage: our addictions to drugs and gambling, our hardness of heart toward those who love us, our resistance to prayer, our impatience with others, our abusive speech and behavior, our prejudice toward races and genders, our ecological waste, our pornographic lusts. Like Moses tonight we must ask the holy water to cover the enemy, to cover what is sinful and set free what is pure.

On Ash Wednesday we committed ourselves to renewal; tonight we celebrate the new people we have become. What was our lenten penance this year? No candy? Less TV? More prayer? More exercise? Whatever it was, it has changed us. It has reaffirmed our faith; it has developed our discipline. We are new, and we stand before the waters of baptism to recommit ourselves in the presence of the risen Jesus. This is the day of our resurrection. We come here tonight not just to watch the movie or to hear the book, but to rise ourselves in glory.