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Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois  
7 April 2007

At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter (C)  
Adapted from a Sermon of Saint Augustine<sup>1</sup>

Listen, dear brothers and sisters, about the Lord's gift to us, and rejoice with us in Him, in His word, in His truth, in His love. Tonight we heard sung, "You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation" (seventh Responsorial Psalm).

A similar Psalm opens with a certain holy longing: "As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul thirsts for you, my God" (Psalm 42:1). Who is it that says these words? Each of you says them, if you are willing. And since it is in your power to utter these words, why ask if it is someone other than yourself who says them?

Such longing, however, is not found in everyone who enters the Church. This is truly lamentable, but those who have tasted the delights of the Lord and who acknowledge that it is Christ Jesus Himself who suits their taste, should not imagine themselves alone. They ought, rather, to believe that the same seed of thirst within them has been scattered throughout the vineyard of the Lord all over the world.

In fact, it is not wrong to understand this cry - As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul thirsts for you, my

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Augustine, On Psalm 41:1.

God - as coming from the catechumens - those not yet baptized. This very night these Elect hasten to the grace of the holy font in churches throughout the world.

Even so, my brothers and sisters, it seems to me that such a longing on the part of each of the faithful is not fully satisfied even in baptism. Rather, this longing - already present before the sacred washing - is enkindled all the more in holy baptism, especially if we realize the pilgrim journey on which we have embarked and the goal of our eternal destination.

Come, dear friends, capture my eagerness; share with me this longing. Let us all love, let us all be inflamed with this thirst, let us all hasten to the fountain of understanding. Let us long for it, then, as the deer for running streams.

Since we have already partaken of the font for the remission of sins, since we have already been baptized, our longing should be centered on that font referred to in another Psalm: "For with you is the fountain of life" (Psalm 35:10). The Lord Jesus is both the fountain and the light, "and in [His] light we shall see light" (Psalm 35:10).

If He is both the fountain and the light, He is also understanding, because he satisfies the soul that longs and thirsts for knowledge. Everyone who understands is enlightened, not by a material or physical or exterior light, but by a certain interior light, the light of love.

Run, then, to the brooks, long for the streams of water! God Himself is the fountain of life, a fountain which never runs dry! In His light is a light that is never obscured. Long for that light, thirst for this water, for the fountain that cannot be seen with bodily eyes. This fountain, this light, can only be seen when the inward eye of the heart is ready, only when the interior thirst is enkindled for the living God.

As you run, then, to the waters, do not run sluggishly or clumsily. Do not run like any kind of animal, but as the deer runs. What does running like the deer mean? It means not to be slow in running, but to run with all your might, to long for the stream with all your might, for we notice in the deer an extraordinary swiftness.

It can also be observed that the deer kills serpents, and afterward its thirst is inflamed all the more intensely. Having killed the serpent, it runs to the waters more speedily than before.

The serpents signify your vices and sins. Destroy these wicked serpents and your longing for the fountain of truth will increase. It may be that greed hisses some evil thought in your ear. Remember that we you are told by Christ to hate anything that leads us to do evil. For if you prefer to do evil, you choose not to drink from the living streams; you choose to be bitten by the serpent rather than destroy it.

As you give in to these serpents, how am I to find in you the desire to run to the waters? When will you ever desire the fountain of wisdom, if you remain intent on the poison of evil deeds? With the grace of God, destroy in yourself whatever is opposed to truth, and when you find yourself freer of your serpents, do not be satisfied, as though there were nothing further to tempt you. For there is always room for improvement, even though you have already attained that state where the enemy is powerless against you.

Perhaps if you are like the deer, you will say to me: "God knows that I am no longer greedy, that I no longer covet anyone's goods, that I am not burning with lust or envy or pride. I am free from them," you will say. Perhaps you will ask about the source in which you may find delight. I tell you: long for the streams of running water! God has the means of refreshing you and satisfying you when you come to Him thirsting like the swift deer, after you have slain the serpents of sin. Approach the fountain of life and "draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation." Amen.