

# Absent Halethorpe friend still sharing 'light amid darkness' at Easter Vigil

**By Paul McMullen**

*pmcmullen@CatholicReview.org*

*Twitter: @ReviewMcMullen*

HALETHORPE – Archbishop William E. Lori concluded his Easter Vigil homily with a call.

“If he has found a new life, new light, new joy in Christ,” he said at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, “then we must spread this light to others, just as the light spread in this church tonight. ‘Shining lamps,’ says Pope Francis. ‘This is the Christian vocation.’”

The spirit of one of those “shining lamps” was simultaneously evidenced on April 4, 10 miles to the southwest as the dove flies, at Church of the Ascension in Halethorpe.

Robin Anikas, her husband Vince, and their son Vincent III were among the candidates who were initiated into the Catholic Church there.

Robin was baptized Methodist. She and Vince were married in a Lutheran church, where their son was baptized some 20 years ago. All found their way to the Catholic Church through friends and neighbors, none more influential than Bob Noble, who died two years ago.

“He lived seven years longer than he was supposed to, and I believe that was because of his faith,” Robin said. “He was a good, kind person, who would do anything for anyone. He was always involved in his church, and you felt that when you were around him.”

“We always described him as St. Bob,” Robin said.

*To view an Easter Vigil slideshow, navigate the arrows below.*

His widow Maggie Noble served as Vincent III’s sponsor. Robin and Vince were sponsored by Cindy and Tim Hentz, respectively, their friends and now their fellow parishioners.

“Bob exemplified the good of the Catholic Church in every sense of the word,” Cindy said.

A sheet metal mechanic, Bob Noble had served as a pre-Cana counselor and eucharistic minister and had led family retreats, first at St. Clement I in Lansdowne

and then at Ascension.

"He was always involved with church," Noble said of her husband. "When he got cancer, he saw the light a little more. He would lift you up."

The Anikas family's initiation was the culmination of nearly a year of preparation, but the process began decades ago for Robin.

"I love what I got from my aunt, growing up Methodist, but I was always curious about the tradition and customs of the Catholic Church," she said. "When I was 4, I saw a nun on TV and began telling everyone I wanted to be one. I grew up in a strong faith background, but something was missing."

"Bob, Cindy, and Tim, being around them, it was infectious. 'What do you know that I don't?'" Robin said. "An amazing group of people prepared us through the Rite of Election. I'm going to miss spending Monday nights with them."

Bob's legacy was made all the more poignant by Father John Williamson, whose homily referenced his own struggles against cancer.

"Many approach the Resurrection as a get-out-of-jail card," he said, "but if that is what we reduce Easter to, we're missing out on the joy of rebirth. Just like Christ, Easter offers us hope."

Undergoing treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital and on his "20th rosary of the night, as (he) could feel the darkness getting closer," Father Williamson suddenly felt unburdened.

"That's what Easter is all about," he said. "In our darkest hours, that is when the joy, the message of Easter, is something we need to remember."

Father Williamson is pastor of Ascension and nearby St. Augustine in Elkridge. It was the first Easter Vigil shared by the two parishes, one that was elevated by their adult choirs' combining for the first time. Father Leo Patalinghug, a friend of Father Williamson, concelebrated the liturgy.

According to the Archdiocese of Baltimore, an estimated 640 candidates and catechumens came into the Church during Easter Vigils throughout the archdiocese. Candidates have been baptized but have not received the sacraments of Communion and/or confirmation, while catechumens have not been baptized.

At the cathedral, Archbishop Lori spoke of the need of both newcomers and lifelong Catholics to spread God's light.

"When we see the rising tide of violence and death at home and abroad," he said in a homily shared by the archdiocese, "or when we see the poverty of so many right in our own communities, or the people whom we know who have lost their faith and their capacity to hope, we know that the world is not yet free from the grip of sin and death."

"Tonight we see the light of Christ reflected in the joy of those who are to be received into the Church and confirmed; we see it as they join us at the Eucharistic

table for the first time, sharing with us the Body and Blood of Jesus crucified and risen. In renewing our own baptismal promises, we pledge to be missionary disciples, followers of Jesus who spread the light amid darkness.”

*Also see:*

Pope asks prisoners to pray that Christ make him a better servant

Rite of Election a time for bringing families closer