

Date: March 24, 2025

To: Pastors, principals, business managers, Chancery employees

From: Jordan Harper, claims/risk manager, Catholic Mutual on behalf of John McNeil, facilities manager – St. Jude the Apostle

Re: Easter Vigil fire

Each Easter Vigil, pastors bless the fire initiating the Easter Vigil service. We must be aware of and ready for the potential danger to life and property that comes with fire. A very unfortunate event occurred last year in which a pastor in Spain died from burns received while performing the blessing of the fire at his church. The unfortunate and deadly incident that occurred in Spain last Easter serves as a real-life reminder of the importance of safety during the Easter Vigil service.

As a parishioner and facility manager at Saint Jude the Apostle Catholic Church, John McNeil has managed the Easter Vigil fire for St. Jude the Apostle parish Easter Vigil services. As a 34-year veteran of the Fire Service here in Atlanta, John would like to stress some very basic fire safety practices that should be performed before, during and after each Easter Vigil Fire service.

- Easter fires should be a simple fire pit fire that is located a safe distance outside and away from church buildings.
- Once ignited, the fire should be closely supervised by a designated person to ensure everyone's safety throughout the extent of the fire burning.
- Everyone should remain at a safe distance (minimum of six (6) ft.) from the fire. The pastor lighting the paschal candle should ensure vestments do not come into close contact with the fire.
- Water for quick extinguishment and a proper sized fire extinguisher should be readily available to extinguish the fire.

If you have any further questions on fire safety for your parish's Easter Vigil fire, please contact John McNeil at jmcneil@saintjude.net.

Sincerely,

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