

The Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
St. Luke 2:1-14
December 24th, 2020
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

She Brought Forth Her Firstborn Son

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks unto Thee, that of Thy mercy and compassion Thou didst suffer Thy dear Son to become incarnate, and didst through Him redeem us from sin and everlasting death: We beseech Thee, enlighten our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may ever be thankful for such grace, and comfort ourselves with the same in all tribulation and temptation, and at last obtain eternal salvation through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tonight, we celebrate the Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. A vigil is the act of keeping watch in the night. The shepherds living in the countryside were keeping watch over their flocks by night. They were keeping vigil. They were watching in the night to protect their sheep from any dangers that may have occurred. Our vigil—our keeping watch tonight—is in anticipation of our Lord's Nativity—His birth in our flesh. We are keeping vigil for our Lord's coming. Certainly, this night we keep vigil as we hear of our Lord's coming to us in our flesh, but we also are keeping vigil for our Lord + Jesus to come to us. He is coming to us tonight in His Word and in His Sacrament. He came to us in our flesh at His Nativity, but tonight He comes to us in His Body and Blood delivered to us in bread and wine in His Blessed Sacrament.

He will indeed come to us again in His flesh on the Last Day. Bearing the marks of His crucifixion in His hands, feet and side, He will call men to Himself to judge both the quick and the dead. Those who are found faithful—who trust in His works and merits for them—will receive the crown of eternal life. Those who have spurned the Lord and rejected Him and His Word will be delivered to the pit of Hell.

We have been gifted with faith through the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. He has created and He sustains faith and life in us through the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments according to Christ's institution. The Holy Ghost uses the means in the Church to bring forth new Christians. Holy Mother Church brings forth her firstborn sons through the work of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace. She wraps us, born of water and the Spirit, in the swaddling cloths of the Word and the Sacraments. We are clothed with the garment of our Firstborn Brother, our Lord + Jesus Christ; the garment of His righteousness. She places us in the manger of the Church, where we hear about how we are full of sin and in need of a Savior, and how our Lord + Jesus, Who is brought forth tonight for us by the Blessed Virgin Mary—Her Firstborn Son—accomplishes our salvation and redemption through His perfect obedience to the Law of God on our behalf, and His innocent suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross to atone for our sins and the

sins of the whole world. We who have been brought forth in faith by Holy Mother Church, are also considered firstborn sons. We are co-heirs with our Brother, our Lord + Jesus Christ.

He is brought forth for us by His mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. We keep vigil in anticipation of His birth, but we await the greater day of His coming again to us. The Day when He will take us from this valley of sorrow to our eternal home in Heaven. A woman in labor, as the Blessed Virgin was on this night, is in great pain and travail. The Church, and all those who live and dwell under the bosom of the Church—who have their life and sustenance from their mother, Church—are also under great pain and travail as we await the consummation of the world. We are under the pain and travail of sin dwelling within us, and the consequences of sin reigning in this world. Holy Mother Church brings forth her children in much pain and suffering, for this world wars continuously against the Church and her children.

The devil uses the world and our sinful flesh to cause us much pain and suffering on account of our faithfulness to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits. This is why in the midst of the pain and suffering in this life, amidst the labor pains that the Church endures, we hold fast in faith to the end of the pain when our Lord + Jesus comes to us. He came as a Baby on this night when the Blessed Virgin Mary brought forth her Firstborn Son, and He continues to come to us in His Word and Sacraments, reminding us that He has come into the world bearing our flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He has come bearing our flesh in order to defeat our enemies of the devil, the world, and our flesh.

Therefore, we gather tonight with lighted candles to wait in vigil for our Lord's coming. We wait for the Day when He will rescue us from this vale of tears and take us to live with Him in Heaven for all eternity. The shepherds living in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night were the first to hear the Gospel message of our Lord and Savior coming to us. They were told by the angel to go to Bethlehem and there they would find the Babe wrapped up in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Then the appeared in the night sky the heavenly host praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men." The shepherds received a foretaste of the heavenly realms when the angel choir opened up Heaven and sang them the eternal song of the *Gloria in Excelsis*.

This song which has remained silent among us these past weeks we also were able to hear once again as the bells loudly announced for us the coming of our Lord and Savior in the flesh to win for us forgiveness of our sins, and give us eternal life and salvation. This eternal song which we sing every Sunday outside of the penitential seasons is a foretaste for us of the heavenly joys which we will enjoy for all eternity. It proclaims to us that our Lord + Jesus, the Savior of the world, has been brought forth for us poor, miserable sinners.

The Blessed Virgin Mary brought forth her Firstborn Son, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger on the first night of celebration of our Lord's Nativity. Angels announced His birth to those keeping vigil in the night over their flocks. And shepherds came and worshiped the newborn Babe lying in a manger in the House of Bread—Bethlehem.

Holy Mother Church brings forth her children through the work of the Holy Ghost creating and sustaining faith and life through the means of grace. She announces to us that our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has come to us to redeem and save us from sin, death and the power of the devil through her herald, the pastor. The minister of the Lord has been sent to us in this night as we keep vigil. He has been sent to those who live in the field of the Church to announce that our Lord + Jesus has come to us bearing our flesh, and He will come again on the Last Day to take us from this world filled with pain and great travail to our eternal home. While we wait in vigil with eager anticipation of our Lord's coming again, He does not leave us nor forsake us, but He continues to come to us through His gracious

and merciful means of grace that strengthen and renew faith in us, so that we cling to Him and His works and promises.

Therefore, my dear friends, as we keep vigil with lighted candles this night, let us rejoice that our Lord + Jesus has been brought forth by His mother Mary to join us in our flesh as our Brother. And let us rejoice that our mother, the Church, has brought us forth into a new life where we have been made co-heirs in the inheritance of eternal life with our Firstborn Brother—the Lord + Jesus. Today our Lord + Jesus has been begotten; He has been brought forth for us bearing our flesh. We have also been begotten by Holy Mother Church through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost in the waters of Holy Baptism. In her bosom we are cared for, and daily do we receive from her life and salvation. For the Firstborn Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been brought forth for us this night, and we have been made to be co-heirs with Him of eternal life. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, Gracious Father, Who in the fulness of time didst send Thy Son to become man, to assume our flesh and become our Brother, we thank Thee for Thy truth and fatherly goodness in giving us this Savior, by Whose birth we are delivered from sin, death, Satan, and Hell; and we beseech Thee, keep us until the end in true knowledge of our Redeemer, that, with all the holy angels, we may rejoice at His Nativity, and behold Him, together with Thee and the Holy Ghost, in glory and majesty, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!