

22 March 2008
Easter Vigil

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“This is the Night”

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, His first words were “*Let there be light.*” (Gen 1:3) Tomorrow, when God our Lord and Saviour finishes His work of re-creation with the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, there will again be light. The darkness that reigned on Calvary will be forever shattered as the Light of the World rises from the dust of death, and death is defeated forevermore.

Tonight, we gather in anticipation, for we know the joy that awaits tomorrow. Tonight we gather in the calm, to reflect, to think, to meditate, on the significance of all that we have remembered this week, in the stillness of the night. Tonight we gather by candlelight – not a vigil to remember the dead, but as the wise virgins awaiting their Bridegroom. (Matt 25)

Tonight we take our place with the Old Testament believers. We will hear as they heard, of the work of Christ in, with, and under history. He is the creative Word that caused the Light to shine into the darkness at the beginning. He is the ark that rescued Noah and his family and creation. He is the pillar of cloud and fire that lead Israel through the Sea. He is the One who gives us His Spirit and makes our hearts new. He is the Redeemer and confidence of Job. He is Zephaniah’s Lord in our midst, mighty to save. He is the fourth man in the fiery furnace, saving the three from the hellish fire. He is the One who fulfills these and all the Scriptures, and now fills us with the joy and peace of His forgiveness and life. For we know these stories are our stories, and this salvation our salvation.

For we have been joined to this Saviour, our Saviour, in Holy Baptism, which we will also remember this night. And joined to His death and resurrection, all that He is and all that He does, is yours. Nothing has been left undone, and nothing left ungiven. He gives to you all that He is, that all that you are may be His.

Tonight we sit by candlelight, for the news of the resurrection is but a small, flickering light as we are immersed in the mystery of the crucified and risen Lamb, who laid down His life for us. At sunrise, all the world will know. But tonight, we

gather in anticipation. To hear the Word. For in this most holy night our Savior, Christ the Lord, broke the power of death and by His resurrection brought life and salvation to all creation. Let us praise the Lord, for He truly keeps His Word. The sun of righteousness has dawned upon us who have sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

(Thanks to Rev. William Cwirla for some of the inspiration for this homily.)