

The Great Vigil of Easter C'19

20 April 2019

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

North Little Rock, Arkansas

The Rev. Carey Stone

In the **N**ame of the **F**ather, and of the **S**on, and of the **H**oly **S**pirit. Amen.

Tonight, you have come at a most Holy moment in time. Tonight, there is a sense of timelessness, that comes from the blending of the ancient with the present and future. We begin the service in tribal fashion by entering in darkness and lighting a fire.

There are other symbols all around us that have a story to tell. I'd like to invite you to take in a good deep breath, and then breathe out. Keep doing that, now, what do you smell? Some of the things that I smell tonight – incense made from frankincense and myrrh, then there's the sweet smell of Easter lilies, together with the smell of well-worn prayer book pages, and of burning candles. These smells are here to remind us that we are not alone. The frankincense and myrrh take us back to the arid climate of the Middle Eastern desert, and to the gifts first given by the

wise men to the Christ-child. Prayer books have that unique smell of well used books, and remind us of the inheritance of worship that we have been given as Christians. The Easter lilies give off a powerfully strong and sweet smell like no other flower, and symbolizes the Light of Christ, his resurrection, and the New Life he offers us.

Besides these smells there is much to hear. We've listened to the readings of our tribal story all the way from the creation by God, to the first people of faith, their deliverance from slavery and their journey to the promised land. Then the coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God, and the founding of the Church to continue Christ's ministry of reconciling love, and proclamation of his Holy Gospel. We have also heard the ancient chants of the church that remind us all that God and the saints are always with us, and the high value that's placed upon music in Christian worship.

Besides these sounds there is much to see. The candles that are lit, especially the large paschal candle, symbolizes the Light of the resurrected Christ that overcame

the dark and evil powers of this world. We see the stations of the cross on the walls reminding us of Christ's final hours before Easter. Down in front we see a very special piece of furniture called a baptismal font, and will contain the Holy water used for baptism when we welcome yet another soul into Christ's Kingdom. From the font we notice the altar where we will share the body and blood of Christ as Christ has commanded us to observe. Tonight, the Gospel surrounds us and proclaims Christ's victory over death through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Our tribe is an inclusive one, and our story is the whole message for the whole world, no matter what color, what race, what gender, what orientation, what socio-economic level, or what country you were born in, we all have been chosen by God as God's beloved children, and that there is no bad news that can ever finally triumph over this marvelous, wonderful, Good News that Love wins! Alleluia!