

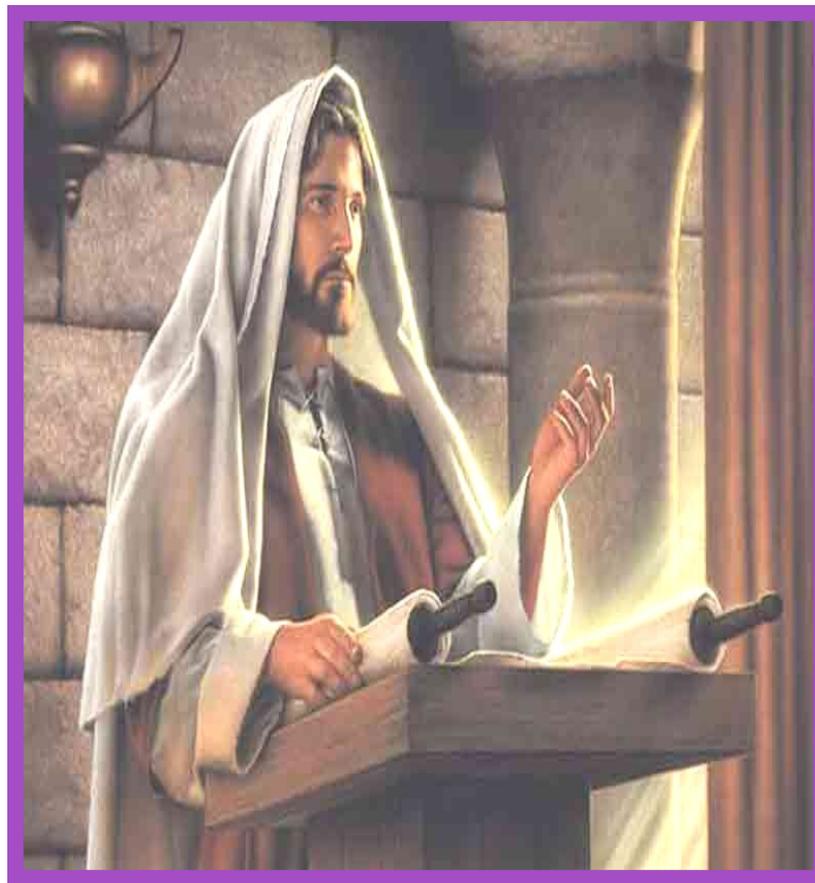
when he already keeps watch who is arranging to enter? Let us then watch and pray: that both within and without we may celebrate this vigil. God speaks to us in the holy Scriptural readings. Let us speak to Him in our prayers. If we listen obediently to His voice, He to Whom we pray dwells within us.

Turning, then to the Lord our God, the Father Almighty, let us as best we can give thanks with all our hearts, beseeching Him that in His Goodness He will mercifully hear our prayers, and by His grace drive evil from our thoughts and actions. May he grant us an increase in our faith, guide our minds, grant us His holy inspirations, and bring us to joy without end, through His Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.



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**SERMON ON
THE VIGIL OF EASTER
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
149 - 2**



JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

IN THE HOLY NIGHT OF THE PASCH

Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

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Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 28: 1-7

by: Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor

How are sacred vigils to be celebrated? The Blessed Paul, exhorting us to imitate him, among many other things which are indications of his own virtue, speaks also of: *frequent watching's* (II Cor. xi. 27). How much the more eagerly should we keep watch during this vigil, the mother of all the sacred vigils, when the whole world watches? Not the world of which it was written: *If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not the Father* (I Jn. ii. 15).

The devils and their angels rule that world; that is, the children of unbelief. Against these we wage war, as the same Apostle tells us where he says: *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness* (Eph. vi. 12). We also, until now, were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord (Eph. v. 8). So by the light of our vigils, let us stand firm against the rulers of darkness.

It is not that world then which watches during this vigil, but this, of which it was said: *For God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their sins* (II Cor. v. 19). Nevertheless, so great is the splendor of this vigil throughout the whole world, that they also are, bodily, compelled to watch who are, not simply sleeping, but wholly buried in tartarean (lower region of hell) iniquity.

They also watch this night, during which what was long ago foretold is now made visible: *And night shall be light as the day* (Ps. cxxxviii. 12). This has place in the hearts of the just, to whom it was said: *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph. v. 8). This has place for all who take part; both those whose eyes are on the Lord, and those who do not praise Him.

This night then the whole world keeps vigil: the world that hates Him, and the world restored to Him. The one, now delivered, watches that it may give praise to its deliverer; the other, now condemned, that it may blaspheme its Judge. The one keeps watch, fervent and loving in the mind of the just; the other, weeping and gnashing its teeth. Love inspires one, hate the other; the Christian rules one, diabolic envy the other. Thus, without knowing, even our enemy teaches us how we should keep watch for our own sake, when he, because of us, keeps watch who envies us.

Many there are among those in no way signed with the Name of Christ who are in sorrow, many in shame. Many who draw near to faith sleep not through fear of God. For many reasons the holy solemnity rouses them. How then shall he not keep watch rejoicing who is a friend of Christ, when he who is His enemy watches though in suffering? How the Christian should be on fire to keep watch for this so great glory of Christ, when the Pagan is ashamed to sleep? How fitting it is that he who has entered this great House should keep watch in this solemnity,