

A Lent 1 2017 Matthew 4: 1-11

In this violent, politically charged and unpredictable world, standing vigil has become all too familiar.

Crowds gather at night and light candles to honor, to memorialize or to protest.

When was the last time you stood vigil? Maybe it was at the **site of the bridge shootings** or at a **Take back the night** demonstration.

I thought about that when I read an article entitled “Keeping Vigil”, which I found on the [God in all Things](#) website.

Here’s how the author Andy Otto began his column:

For the past three weeks of my new daughter’s life I’ve had restless nights, rocking her in my arms in our glider, lulling her back to sleep.

I’ve found that these moments are a kind of keeping vigil, watching and waiting patiently for her slumber to return.

Yet I find myself so sleepy.

It’s hard to keep my eyes open.

I hear Jesus saying to me, his friend, to stay awake and keep alert, just as in the Garden.

It’s a call to a kind of keen Ignatian attentiveness, to notice not just my baby but my feelings, my emotions, my state of heart.

Part of me wishes to pass the time with a book or reading something on my phone.

But when my eyes are adjusted to the semi-wakefulness I gaze down at my little baby as her eyes gently close and at her shifting facial expressions as she gets comfortable in my arms.

I can’t look away.

My father-in-law has sat with her a whole hour, just staring, no agenda. Just gazing with deep, deep love. And I wonder, is this how God gazes upon us? Does God keep vigil for us just as I am keeping vigil for my beloved daughter?(1/16/17)

So I might ask again. When was your last vigil?

Was it at the death bed of a parent or watching for your teenager to return home safely?

Was it waiting for test results or a word from your doctor?

Or was it staying up all night, waiting to hear that you have a new Grandchild?

And what do you think Karen? Could we say that our **youth are, in a sense, holding vigil tonight at our Lock In.?**

Vigils are a period of keeping awake or alert, especially to keep watch or pray.

Vigils are a time of preparation, especially spiritual preparation.

Vigils are a time of waiting, the kind of waiting that gives birth to something new or to discovery.

Today, this first Sunday of Lent, we remember Jesus’ vigil in the wilderness.

In the wilderness, Jesus discovered his unique relationship with God and prepared for his public ministry.

Jesus was baptized by John and a dove descended with the words, **This is my Son.**

And then Jesus entered the wilderness (which by the way was a desert not a forest) where he struggles with what it meant to be son of god.

Three times he is tempted to “play God.”

Instead, Jesus chooses to remain human.

The tempter says: ***Command these stones to become loaves of bread.***

Jesus responds: ***One does not live by bread alone but by the world of God.***

The tempter tries again from the pinnacle of the temple: ***If you are the son of God, throw yourself down and let the angels save you!***

Jesus refuses and says: ***Do not put the Lord your God to the test.***

Then one last time, from a high mountain, the tempter promises: ***All these kingdoms I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.***

Jesus stands strong and dismisses temptation with the words: ***Away with you Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'***

And at that point, the devil left him and suddenly angels came and waited on Jesus.

So you see, the wilderness was Jesus' vigil.

In the wilderness, Jesus waited, not a passive sitting around but he engaged the wilderness long enough to discover the divinity of God and his own humanity.

Barbara Brown Taylor, a theologian, points out that the one who was content to be human in the wilderness became known as the Son of God.

In Lent we are given the gift of "vigil" time.

It is a time to watch and pray.

It is a time to engage our own wildernesses and to discover what it means to be human, truly human.

It is also a time to rediscover God.

And finally it is a time to deepen our relationship with God's son Jesus Christ.

We do not enter Lent blindly. We carry with us the knowledge of Easter and the resurrection and the promise of salvation.

But for 40 days we wait and watch and pray in order to discover who we are as Children of God.

Like Jesus we are called to resist power and control and the temptation to "play God." And when we do, we discover that we just may become more human...human in the best sense of the word.

Keeping the Lenten disciplines of mid-week worship and reading the Gospel of Matthew, of intentional prayer, fasting and service all of that helps us keep vigil until the dawn of Easter.

Watch and wait,
Keep the Lenten Vigil.
God will surely bless you.

This is the good news of today's gospel.
Amen

