

Chapter 5

Holy Saturday

(Leader's Guide)

Luke 23:56

- 1 Holy Saturday has always been a difficult day to peg down. The crucifixion has happened and is done but the Resurrection hasn't yet taken place. What are some words you would use to describe the mood and feel of Holy Saturday?

This can be a difficult question. Either here, or at the end of the chapter, you could challenge your students to go and sit in a Catholic Church on Holy Saturday. It's the one day in the year when the Blessed Sacrament is not in the tabernacle. It would be a great meditation to sit in the church and reflect upon the very first Holy Saturday. Peter, James, John, Mary, and the rest of the disciples were mourning the death of Christ, with His body in the tomb. As we sit in the church on Holy Saturday, the physical presence of Jesus is not present in the tabernacle. This is a beautiful way that the Church tries to live out the reality of Holy Saturday when Christ was no longer with us on earth.

- 2 What do you think about Cardinal Ratzinger's statement above, that Holy Saturday "expresses the unparalleled experience of our age?" What do you think he means by this?

The philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche once made the famous statement that "God is dead." This was as much a cultural observation as it was a

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faith statement. Our society often lives in such a way as to suggest that God is dead, or was never around in the first place. Cardinal Ratzinger says that this day is perfect for our society because the notion makes it easy to simply overlook Christ. What we know that the disciples didn't is that there *was* a Resurrection. Do we or our society still live in such a way to suggest that Jesus is still in the grave? Even as Christians, what are some ways that we still live like this?

- 3 What do you think the apostles were thinking on this day? Their teacher, the one they trusted to be the Messiah was now lying in a grave. What do you think was going through their minds? What would be going through *your* mind if you were in their shoes?
- 4 Describe a time when you have felt abandoned by God.

Questions 3 and 4: Try to really probe their thoughts on this one, especially on what they themselves would be thinking and feeling. Try to share some experience from your own life for question 4. Take your time letting the students answer. Really try to get them to connect with the abandonment of the disciples on that day.

- 5 **Read Luke 4:35-41.** What parallels do you see between what the disciples are probably feeling on Holy Saturday, and this passage?

It's possible to look at this passage as a foreshadowing of Holy Saturday. Though Jesus is actually right there with them, the Apostles are scared that He has abandoned them to the storm. They fail to trust in His goodness and concern for them. On Holy Saturday, this experience is magnified tenfold. All along their journey to Jerusalem, Jesus had been warning the disciples and explaining to them that He must suffer and die but then be raised. The disciples still fail to understand what Jesus was saying. They are being asked to put all of their trust in God's goodness and care. **Ask:** How hard do you think it would be for *you* to trust like that?

- 6 What is the only thing Luke tells us about the events of Holy Saturday (Lk 23:56)? Why do you think Luke includes this small detail?

All that Luke tells us is that on the Sabbath (Saturday), they rested “according to the law.” There could be different answers to this question, but one thought is that Luke was showing us just how empty that day was. At least if the disciples could have gone about working and keeping busy, they may have been able to take their minds off of the terrible things which just happened. Perhaps God planned it this way so they had no choice but to sit and dwell in the reality of Christ’s death. They stopped what they were doing and simply rested. The reality of the crucifixion was so great that they needed time to let it sink in. The Resurrection can only truly be understood and appreciated if we truly appreciate and understand the emptiness of the day before. **Ask:** How do we spend Holy Saturday? Do we use it as an opportunity to really contemplate the reality of Christ’s death, or do we busy ourselves with other things and focus on the celebration of Easter? **Challenge** the students to really enter into Holy Saturday this year and let the reality of what the disciples experienced permeate their hearts.