

Chapter 5

Holy Saturday

Preparation: Read Luke 23:56

There is a scene in the first installment of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in which the great wizard Gandalf, who had been helping to guide the main characters on their journey, appears to be killed saving them. The heroes are terribly disheartened and one can almost feel the pain and emptiness that they experience. They're so dismayed that it seems as though they don't know if they can even continue on the journey anymore. What they didn't realize however, was that Gandalf was not dead. In the second part of the trilogy, he returns to them not only alive, but elevated to the state of a White Wizard; a much more powerful and awe-inspiring state than what the main characters had previously known him as.

As Christians, and with the benefit of hindsight, we know the end of the Easter story. In this chapter however, try to truly find yourself in Holy Saturday. Forget that you know what happens tomorrow. Weep with the disciples. Dwell in the emptiness and confusion of that mournful day. Walk with Peter, John, Mary and the rest and try to rediscover the story.

Entering into Christ's Passion:

“On Good Friday our gaze remains fixed on the crucified Christ, but Holy Saturday is the day of the ‘death of God,’ the day which expresses the unparalleled experience of our age, anticipating the fact that God is simply absent, that the grave hides Him, that He no longer awakes, no longer speaks, so that one no longer needs gainsay Him but can simply overlook Him.”

☞ **Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity***

- 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?

- 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?

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

“Something strange is happening here—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.”

Ancient Homily on Holy Saturday