

Silence. Today the world is filled with silence. After intensity of the home celebrations of Passover on Thursday, after the visceral human drama of Good Friday, Holy Saturday is silent. The City that normally bursts with movement now is empty. The churches celebrate no sacraments. There is no preaching just intense silence. Why is this? The ancient homily from the second century used in the morning prayer of Holy Saturday gives us the answer. "The whole earth keeps silence because the king is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh." Humanity is astonished that it could happen.

If we remain faithful to the words of Christ; if we remember them well – all the predictions of his suffering and death, all the times He was trying to prepare us for this moment - we might start realizing that something is happening under this silence. Sometimes we hear silence because nothing happens, and in other times, we think it is silence because we cannot detect the activity. Jesus said, "That day will come to you like a thief." God executed a perfect coup-d'état. As in some cosmic metaphysical political thriller, Jesus during the night of his death overthrew its power. His silent, incredibly effective forces eliminated the shackles of evil, liberated prisoners, took over communication channels and, in the morning, created a new world. People who went to bed on Good Friday in slavery, stained with the tragedy of the cross, woke up in the fresh morning of the new, free mankind. The silence of Saturday is full of energy, full of expectation; it is so intense and fresh because it brings hope. Something enormous and something powerful is happening. God defeats sin from within. God redeems mankind from the most unexpected direction, from the inside. God gives us back the freedom to choose Him.

This is why the liturgy of Holy Saturday is surprising. Literally nothing happens the whole day, only to explode in the evening, after sunset, with the most elaborate liturgy of the whole year – rich and powerful. The liturgy that remembers events from the creation of the world until now. It encompasses with prayer the whole world, every person and every nation, redeeming all human mistakes and finally, bringing fruit of new life: baptism, confirmation, communion, unity of faith. The night which begins in darkness, transforms into the amazing celebration of light that grows out of the one paschal candle and it all ends with a great finale. Late, late into the night, we celebrate the Eucharist and receive the bread and wine that became Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Man. Yet this is not the end. We feel to the very depth of our bones this astonishing information: Christ is alive, He is risen, reverberates as a life-giving echo through the whole universe, through the whole history of the world. Something that was supposed to be the end becomes the beginning. Freedom that was a source of slavery and pain now becomes the key to eternal life. God's promise from the Old Testament is fulfilled, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you, life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

The Explosion by Philip Larkin

On the day of the explosion
Shadows pointed towards the pithead:
In the sun the slagheap slept.

Down the lane came men in pit boots
Coughing oath-edged talk and pipe-smoke,
Shouldering off the freshened silence.

One chased after rabbits; lost them;
Came back with a nest of lark's eggs;
Showed them; lodged them in the grasses.

So they passed in beards and moleskins,
Fathers, brothers, nicknames, laughter,
Through the tall gates standing open.

At noon, there came a tremor; cows
Stopped chewing for a second; sun,
Scarfed as in a heat-haze, dimmed.

*The dead go on before us, they
Are sitting in God's house in comfort,
We shall see them face to face -*

Plain as lettering in the chapels
It was said, and for a second
Wives saw men of the explosion

Larger than in life they managed -
Gold as on a coin, or walking
Somehow from the sun towards them,

One showing the eggs unbroken.