

One

What Jesus did during Holy Saturday

We say in the Apostles Creed that on this day, Holy Saturday, Jesus descended into hell. Hell is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word *Sheol* and the Greek word *Hades* which both meant the state after death.

The CCC (633) tells us that Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned but to free the just who had died before him and take them into heaven.

To appreciate what Jesus did on Holy Saturday by going to all the people who died before his Resurrection, all the innumerable people who dwelt in death we need to understand what death was like before Jesus and what it would be without Jesus.

We understand death as Christians. Now that Jesus has opened Heaven to us, we view death as being welcomed into Heaven by our relatives and friends who went before us, welcomed by our guardian angel, welcomed by Mary, and by God into heavenly joy. But before Holy Saturday, well that was a very different experience! When you died, you were just alone, totally and completely alone, no friends, no relatives, and separated from God – just alone – and to me that is the most frightening thing imaginable.

Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “In truth, one thing is certain: there exists a night into whose solitude no voice reaches; there is a door through which we can only walk alone—the door of death. In the last analysis all the fear in the world is fear of this loneliness...Death is absolute loneliness.”

Two

Conquering Death

Jesus died on Good Friday, on Holy Saturday he strode through the gate of our final loneliness right into death, he went down into the abyss of our abandonment. Where no voice can reach us any longer, *there is He*.

By his presence, Death is conquered. Now there is life in the midst of death because love dwells in it. Now only deliberate self-enclosure is hell or, as the Bible calls it, the second death (Rev 20:14, for example). But death no longer has to be the path into icy solitude. The gates of death have been opened.

Moses, Budha, Confucious, Mohammed, Neitze, Darwin, and Stephen Hawking all died and none of them can help those who dwell in the realm of the dead, none of them can free the dead from their absolute loneliness. There is only One, Jesus Christ, who strode into death to take mankind into life. Let us praise Him and Adore Him!

Three

Pope Benedict gives a concrete example that may help to make this clearer.

“When a child is alone in the darkness of night, he feels frightened, however convincingly he has been shown that there is no reason at all to be frightened. As soon as he is alone in the darkness, and thus has the experience of utter loneliness, fear arises, the fear peculiar to man, which is not fear of anything in particular but simply fear in itself... Here we come up against something much deeper, namely, the fact that where man falls into extreme loneliness he is not afraid of anything definite that could be explained away; on the contrary, he experiences the fear of

loneliness, the uneasiness and vulnerability of his own nature, something that cannot be overcome by rational means... How then, we must ask, can such fear be overcome if proof of its groundlessness has no effect? Well, the child will lose his fear the moment there is a hand there to take him and lead him and a voice to talk to him; at the moment therefore at which he experiences the fellowship of a loving human being... This conquest of fear reveals at the same time once again the nature of the fear: that it is the fear of loneliness, the anxiety of a being that can only live with a fellow being. The fear peculiar to man cannot be overcome *by reason* but only by the *presence of someone who loves him.*"

On Holy Saturday Jesus entered the darkness and solitude of death. Can you imagine the sheer joy of those who had dwelt in that dark solitary confinement for so long when the immense light that is Christ burst upon them? When he called their name and took them by the hand into the perfect joy of Heaven?

Four

Conquering Loneliness

Every person is alone in some way. Every person longs to be known, understood, and appreciated, yet no other person can do that to the degree that we need. No human person has access to the real depths of another. No one can really penetrate into the innermost being of someone else. Every encounter, beautiful as it may seem, basically only dulls the incurable wound of loneliness.

The importance of Holy Saturday is not limited to death. Jesus has not only descended into the realm of the dead, He descended into your soul by Baptism. The truth of the matter is that you are never alone. Jesus is within you, He said so Himself. If you will learn to enter into silence and

solitude and remain there every day for some time, eventually you will meet Jesus and you will realize there is nothing to fear, you are never alone,. More importantly, you will meet the only person who can know, understand, and appreciate you to the depth you need.

Five

The Second Day of the Divine Mercy Novena

Jesus said to St. Faustina, “Today bring to me the souls of priests and religious, and immerse them in My unfathomable mercy. It was they who gave Me the strength to endure My bitter Passion. Through them, as through channels, My mercy flows out upon mankind.”

She Responded, “Most Merciful Jesus, from whom comes all that is good, increase Your grace in us, that we may perform worthy works of mercy, and that all who see them may glorify the Father of Mercy who is in heaven.”

“The Fountain of God’s love dwells in pure hearts, bathed in the Sea of Mercy, radiant as stars, bright as the dawn.”

“Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the company [of chosen ones] in Your vineyard – upon the souls of priests and religious; and endow them with the strength of Your blessing. For the love of the Heart of your Son in which they are enfolded, impart to them Your power and light, that they may be able to guide others in the way of salvation, and with one voice sing praise to Your boundless mercy for ages without end. Amen.”

Divine Mercy Chaplet

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth;
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father
almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of
saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life
everlasting.
Amen.”

Our Father

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom
come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into
temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Hail Mary

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among
women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of
our death. Amen.”

On the Our Father beads pray:

“Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of
Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our
sins and those of the whole world.”

On the Hail Mary beads, you will pray:

“For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

In conclusion, three times you will recite these words:

“Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.”