

The emptiness of Holy Saturday

Everyone who has ever lived, who will ever live, will someday undergo a Holy Saturday of their own. Someday we will all know the power of overwhelming loss when life as we know it changes, when all hope dies in midflight. Then, and only then, can we begin to understand the purpose of Holy Saturday.

The importance of Holy Saturday lies in its power to bring us to the kind of faith the spiritual masters call “mature.” Holy Saturday faith is not about counting our blessings; it is about dealing with darkness and growing in hope. Without the Holy Saturdays of life, none of us may ever really grow up spiritually.

On Holy Saturday the church is empty. The loss finally sets in. We could sit in the empty pews, pass the empty churches, heavy-hearted from the reality of yesterday, of Good Friday and its dashing of our securities. Today, alone and bereft, we come face-to-face with the question we try so hard to avoid the rest of the year: how do we deal with the God who seems to have gone from our lives as well as the God who is the Giver of light? Have we been abandoned? Are we left now on our own in this world? Is there nothing else? Was all the rest of it pure fairy tale?

Where is this Jesus who walked the earth as we do still? The Jesus who understands us has disappeared from sight, humiliated, powerless, docile beyond understanding in the face of the oppressor. This Jesus for whom the stars shone in Bethlehem has been pressed facedown into the ground; all the Beatitude declarations, all the new vision of life for naught. It has ended in degradation and destruction. There are no cheering crowds for us to follow here. Now we are on our own. We are left to ask ourselves what Jesus once asked of Peter himself: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29)

No doubt about it: this is the day of the going down into the tomb—our own as well as Jesus’. It is now the time for us to die to false hope. But it is also time for us to die to faithless despair.

Hope, you see is a slippery thing, often confused with certainty, seldom understood as the spiritual discipline that makes us certain of only one thing: in the end, whatever happens will be resolved only by the doing of the will of God, however much we attempt to wrench it to our own ends.

There is the hope that we can begin, finally, to see the world as God sees it and so trust that God is indeed everywhere and in everything at all times—in abstruse as well as the luminous, whether we ourselves can see the hand of God in this moment or not.

—from [The Liturgical Year](#) by Joan Chittister (Thomas Nelson)

Joan Chittister.
Mon. 29th March 2021