

*“Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence and stillness, because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh.”*

In these words from an ancient homily the Church sets before us the true meaning of this day. For the free world it is ‘Easter Saturday’ – a day for being away on holiday, taking part in some sporting event or shopping for a party. For those suffering from war or famine it is yet another day in the shadow of death. How should we Christians be observing this day? Surely in the same way as we have observed the earlier days of Holy Week – that is, with Jesus.

He has shared in every moment of human life – from conception in the womb of Mary to death on the Cross. As the Letter to the Hebrews says (2: 17), *He had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God able to atone for human sins.* So in our present trouble we may be confident that he is with us – with the lonely and the anxious, with the sick and those who care for them, with traumatized, with the dying, the dead and the bereaved.

So today is not a day to try to escape from the realities of the human condition – it is a day to face them in the confidence that Jesus the Saviour is with us.

Today is not ‘Easter Saturday’, it is Holy Saturday – ‘the Holy and Great Sabbath’ – the day on which God the Son rests after his work – the work by which he has re-made the human race, and, with our race, the whole of creation.

It is in the night that comes between this day and the next that the triumph of Christ is revealed to those who believe and trust in him.

When the world is asleep, or busy with its everyday affairs, Christ will burst the tomb, and the truth of his victory will appear.

But for today his soul joins the souls of the faithful dead – from Adam and Eve to the Good Thief – and prepares them, as he does all who die trusting in his mercy for the life of heaven.

So we pray with confidence:

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them.*