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“Knowing how to stop is an act of trust”

In his 17 September general audience, Pope Leo XIV continued his catechetical cycle on Jesus Christ, our hope, speaking about Holy Saturday.

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Dear brothers and sisters,

In our journey of catechesis on Jesus our hope, today we will contemplate the mystery of Holy Saturday. The Son of God lies in the tomb. But this

“absence” of his is not emptiness: it is expectation, a restrained fullness, a promise kept in the dark. It is the day of the great silence, in which the sky seems mute and the earth immobile, but it is precisely there that the deepest mystery of the Christian faith is fulfilled. It is a silence laden with meaning, like the womb of a mother who carries her unborn but already living child.

The body of Jesus, taken down from the cross, is carefully wrapped, as one does with something precious. John the Evangelist tells us that he was buried in a garden, inside “a new tomb where no one had ever been laid” (*Jn* 19:41). Nothing is left to chance. That garden recalls the lost Eden, the place where God and man were united. And that tomb, never used, speaks of something that has still to happen: it is a threshold, not an end. At the beginning of creation, God planted a garden; now

the new creation also begins in a garden: with a closed tomb that will soon be opened.

Holy Saturday is also a day of rest. According to the Jewish Law, no work is to be done on the seventh day: indeed, after the six days of creation, God rests (cf. *Gen 2:2*). Now, the Son too, after completing his work of salvation, rests. Not because he is tired, but because he loved up to the very end. There is nothing left to add. This rest is the seal on the completed task; it is the confirmation that what should have been done has truly been accomplished. It is a repose filled with the hidden presence of the Lord.

We struggle to stop and rest. We live as if life were never enough. We rush to produce, to prove ourselves, to keep up. But the Gospel teaches us that knowing how to stop is an act of trust that we must learn to perform.

Holy Saturday invites us to discover that life does not always depend on what we do, but also on how we know how to take leave of what we have been able to do.

In the tomb, Jesus, the living Word of the Father, is silent. But it is precisely in that silence that the new life begins to ferment. Like a seed in the ground, like the darkness before dawn. God is not afraid of the passing time, because he is also the God of waiting. Thus, even our “useless” time, that of pauses, emptiness, barren moments, can become the womb of resurrection. Every silence that is welcomed can be the premise of a new Word. Every suspended time can become a time of grace, if we offer it to God.

Jesus, buried in the ground, is the meek face of a God who does not occupy all space. He is the God who lets things be done, who waits, who

withdraws to leave us freedom. He is the God who trusts, even when everything seems to be over. And we, on that suspended Sabbath, learn that we do not have to be in a hurry to rise again; first we must stay and welcome the silence, let ourselves be embraced by limitation. At times we seek quick answers, immediate solutions. But God works in depth, in the slow time of trust. The Sabbath of the burial thus becomes the womb from which the strength of an invincible light, that of Easter, can spring forth.

Dear friends, Christian hope is not born in noise, but in the silence of an expectation filled with love. It is not the offspring of euphoria, but of trustful abandonment. The Virgin Mary teaches us this: she embodies this expectation, this trust, this hope. When it seems to us that everything is at a standstill, that life is a blocked road, let us remember Holy Saturday.

Even in the tomb, God was preparing the greatest surprise of all. And if we know how to welcome with gratitude what has been, we will discover that, precisely in smallness and silence, God loves to transfigure reality, making all things new with the fidelity of his love. True joy is born of indwelt expectation, of patient faith, of the hope that what has been lived in love will surely rise to eternal life.

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