

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday

Cathedral of Mary Our Queen

March 31, 2018

At the dawn of human history, God spoke: "Let there be light and there was light" (Gen. 1:1). When the Israelites made their way in darkness over the uneven desert terrain, they were guided by a pillar of light – the light of God's Word. Following the pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, they trekked through the desert, eventually reaching the Promised Land.

When Jesus was born, wise men from a distant country, all of them Gentiles, were guided by the light of a star to the stable where lay the Newborn King. When Jesus was transfigured before the Apostles on Mount Tabor, his face, his clothes, his very being, became as dazzling as the sun. For all their confusion and turmoil at the death of Jesus, the Apostles did not forget "the glory of God shining on the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

This night we too were led by a pillar of fire into a darkened Cathedral. As the new fire was blessed, symbol of the created world made new, the Paschal Candle was lit and carried in the darkness – not merely the darkness of a building but indeed the darkness of our world and the dark places in our hearts. The words rang out, "Christ our Light!" as the flame of the Easter candle pierced the darkness. And from that great candle, a symbol of Christ, the light of the world, we lit our smaller candles, so that the darkness of our hearts might be dispelled by our sharing in the light of the Risen One.

In the glow of the light of Christ, we sang our Easter praises and listened to the words of Scripture, words that proclaim the creation of the world, the fall of the human race from God's grace, words that proclaim how the light of Christ gradually overtook the darkness as God's holy people journeyed through history –moving from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the promised land, all the while deepening

their understanding and relationship with the living God. The light, the light of Christ, grew brighter as prophets spoke out; they saw and saluted from afar the very events we celebrate this night.

For as the Old Testament finds fulfillment in the New, the light glows most intensely in the Person of Jesus emerging into full view – God’s Son who became one of us, preached the Good News, cured the sick, and, out of love, laid down his life to save us from our sins. Listening afresh to the Good News, our eyes of faith see that which eludes our human sight, namely, the glory of Jesus’ Resurrection, his triumph over sin and death. Now, the light of Christ, symbolized by the Easter candle, floods our minds and our hearts – let us indeed rejoice and give thanks!

To be sure, our joy is not merely about a past event but rather a present reality. For the Risen Lord truly lives among us in his Church and, through the Mass and the Sacraments, we share his risen life. This is why we rejoice in you, who are being baptized and received into the Church. In your journey through life, you too have caught sight of the light of Christ. After a period of *purification and enlightenment*, you have freely presented yourselves to be baptized and confirmed, and, for the first time, to receive Holy Communion at the altar of the Lord. May the light and love of Christ fill your hearts all the days of your life so that you may be his disciples and witnesses in the world!

Holy Saturday is also a night when those of us who are already baptized renew our baptismal promises to reject the glamor, the attractiveness, of evil so as to live truly as God’s children, as true followers of Jesus and members of his Body, the Church.

This is how the light of Christ, first kindled at the dawn of creation, the light which led the Israelites through the dark night of history, the light which emerged in all its glory in the mystery of the Resurrection – this is how the light of Christ shines in our hearts, in our homes, in our parishes. Gazing upon the Risen Lord with the eyes of faith, we greet him as “a lamp for [our] feet and a light for [our] path” (Ps. 119:105)... We greet him as “the light of the world!” (John 8:12) And we resolve to be attentive to God’s Word as it comes to us in the Church, just as we would be attentive ‘to a lamp shining in a dark place’ (Cf. 2 Pet. 1:9). This is how Christ leads us through the highways and byways of our lives, our peaks and valleys, our joys and

sorrows, our strengths and weaknesses – to that heavenly “city which has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God [gives] it light and its light [is] the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23). Christ our light is Risen! Let us rejoice and be glad! Alleluia! Alleluia!