

*How then do we become like him in his death? By having been buried with him in baptism. But how does this burial take place?...First of all one must break with one's life of the past...before beginning this second life, we must bring the first to an end. As in the double course (where the competitors must run to the turning point and back to the start again) a halt, a brief respite, separates the outward run and the return, so also for a change of life it seemed necessary that death intervene between the two lives, to make an end of all that went before and a beginning of all that follows. (St. Basil *On the Holy Spirit* Tuesday of Holy Week, Office of Readings)*

Holy Saturday is traditionally associated with Christ's descent into hell, to free, or at least to offer salvation, to all who have gone before; a way of expressing the universal significance of Christ's death on a cross. But it's a descent *we* have to make too, in order to rise again with Christ. Holy Saturday expresses this for us in the sense of a hiatus between the death of Christ on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday; a hiatus experienced by his immediate disciples as one of real physical and spiritual emptiness. They had lost hope in any resurrection, as the disciples on the road to Emmaus make clear, and were grieving the loss of their Lord just as anyone would for a person one loves and was loved by. It's important that we share in this true sense of loss, this necessary grieving, this experience of an empty day vacated now of meaning. This is our very attenuated descent into hell in order to experience the fullness of resurrection on Sunday – both a new start in our Christian year and a new start in our Christian lives, symbolic of the rise and fall of Christian living throughout all the years of our lives; a pattern made all the more obvious now in this corona crisis where Holy Saturday has become the norm – no eucharist yet – but the promise of resurrection remains. So we grieve the loss of Christ and all the many dead, in the hope that one day we will all rise again together.

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