

Growing up in a family of five kids and two parents, silence was not very plentiful  
In college I always had roommates  
So when I finally bought a house of my own in Rochester when I was working at the Mayo Clinic, I think one of reasons I was never home was because it just felt weird to be home alone  
But I have gotten better at it - I'm OK now with spending an evening alone in the rectory  
Starting in seminary, I started doing a holy hour, an hour of silent prayer with God each morning  
God does some of His greatest work in silence  
In the first reading for the Easter Vigil Mass, God did not create any animals until the 5th day - now granted waves and wind create sound, but those are soothing nature sounds  
So most of creation was made in silence  
We start out our existences in the silence of the womb of our mother's  
God rested on the 6th day, Saturday - He did this as an example for us - God is God - He doesn't need to rest, but He knows that we do  
Two Thousand years ago, He gave us another powerful example - on the 6th day of the week, Jesus' body rested in the tomb  
After giving us the gift of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and dying for our sins in the Passion and Crucifixion on Good Friday, on Holy Saturday He rests in the silence of the tomb  
In the second reading for the Easter Vigil Mass, we hear Abraham being willing to sacrifice his only son out of obedience to God - God spares Abraham's son, but says that because of his obedience, all nations will be blessed through him  
Jesus was a descendent of Abraham - and through Jesus' death and resurrection, all nations are blessed  
We are blessed and freed - Just as the Israelites were in the third reading for the Easter Vigil - God saved them from the yoke of slavery by giving them safe passage through the sea by parting it - unless we ask for God's grace and actively fight for it, we are going to come under the slavery of sin  
Jesus died on the Cross to save us from our sins - Jesus rose from the dead to give us new life, life to the full  
This is a free gift - it does not cost us anything - that is what makes Christianity different - Christianity is first about what Christ did for us - it is not first about rules or what we do for God - it is first about what Christ did for us and how He first loves us  
Now that love demands a response - if we are going to accept Jesus' love and grace, then we called to love Him back and to live life to the full  
In the end material things do not satisfy - I was reading an article that said if you wanted to be happy, spend your money on experiences rather than on things  
Basically it was saying that even though most things we buy last longer than things we experience, such as a vacation, the memories, the experiences, the joy from things decrease with time whereas the joy from experiences increase with time

This is so very true of our experiences of God's love and mercy - in the end, material things do not satisfy - the more we believe this, the less jaded we will become about life, the more Easter joy we will have

When we open ourselves up to experiences of God, God will take away our stoney hearts and give us natural hearts - our hearts are natural, are the way they were created to be, when they are close to God, when they are full of His love and grace

The second reading from Easter morning encourages us to focus on the things above, on the eternal things - this is good advice since we will be spending a lot more time in eternity than we will be on earth

If we are Christian, if we are close to God, our lives will not automatically be easy - if fact, being a Christian in today's world is harder than ever - however, being a Christian will give your life purpose, meaning, and hope

If we unite our sufferings to the sufferings of Christ just as St. Paul tells us to do in Colossians 1:24, we will be united with Him in His resurrection

In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, came to the tomb Easter morning with great sadness in their hearts - they had given up hope

But when they and Peter and John say the empty tomb and the burial cloths, they believed the impossible

Jesus' resurrection was such great news, they couldn't keep quiet about it

In the first reading from Easter morning, we see Peter proclaiming Jesus' life, death, and resurrection to all who were close by - He was so excited about who Jesus was in His life, He couldn't be quiet about it

Christianity isn't for sissies - The Sequence, a song that is read or sung on Easter morning, says that death and life have met in combat - obviously life won; Jesus won

Even though we know the outcome, even though we know that Jesus has won the war against Satan and evil on Easter morning when He rose from the dead, the battle rages on

The battle between good and evil rages on inside each one of us

Because of Easter, we know which side wins the war - so the choice is ours - in every moral decision we make, we are making a choice to be on the winning side, the side of Christ, or the losing side, the side of Satan

Jesus does not leave us to fight this battle alone - we must call upon the graces of the Cross, upon the graces of the resurrection to defeat evil in our own hearts and live life to the full, to live the life of joy, purpose, and meaning that God created us for

We are an Easter people - we are a people full of hope - that even when dragged through the trenches between good and evil, we know that our Savior reigns - we know that in the end Jesus reigns in the world, and He wants to reign in our hearts

Jesus, you have died and risen from the dead - Alleluia! - Happy Easter