

Homily based on the readings from December 10, 2025 (Isaiah 40.25-31; Matthew 11.28-30)

As human beings, we are innately familiar with the rhythms of the natural world. Every year we experience the full cycle of the seasons – from the first blossoms of spring to the frozen bleakness of winter. As Catholics, our liturgical calendar is heavily based on these patterns – our commemoration of the birth of Christ, for example, takes place at the point of the year when *darkness* is most oppressive. We have also grown accustomed to the corresponding rhythms of *human* life. Every single day – we wake up, we get dressed, we work, we become tired, we go to sleep. A similar pattern pertains to our lives as a whole. We are born as infants, we mature into adults, we perform whatever tasks God has prepared for us, we grow old, and ultimately we pass away.

As far as I can tell, the correspondence between sleep and death is universally recognized – in every culture and tradition around the world. This relationship is prominently reflected in our own liturgical worship –

particularly in the Office of Compline, or Night Prayer, the daily conclusion to the Liturgy of the Hours. I will not dwell on the details, but the final blessing every night goes as follows: “[m]ay the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.” One of the hymns that is commonly sung at the beginning of compline makes this connection even more explicitly:

We praise you, Father, for your gifts
Of dusk and nightfall over earth,
Foreshadowing the mystery
Of death that leads to endless day.

The point, of course, is that once we have moved past this mortal world, there will be no more sunrises and sunsets, no more summers and winters. In the words of Saint Augustine:

There, the days do not come and go in succession, and the beginning of one day does not mean the end of another; all days

are one, simultaneously and without end, and the life lived out in these days has itself no end.

The Lord offers all of us something *radically* different from anything we have ever experienced. As we heard in today's first reading:

The LORD is the eternal God,
creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint nor grow weary ...

He gives strength to the fainting;

for the weak he makes vigor abound. ...

They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength,

they will soar as with eagles' wings;

They will run and not grow weary,

walk and not grow faint.

The full scope of eternal life is beyond our mortal comprehension, but there are several facts about which we have *complete* certainty. In particular, there can be no sickness, no sorrow, and no decay while we

are basking in the radiance of Jesus Christ. In our present state, we are forced to contend with both nighttime and winter; in our heavenly homeland, though, there will be *no* cold and *no* darkness – *for the glory of God will give us light, and our lamp will be the Lamb.*