

A few years back my brother Tom took a vacation to Europe. Very few people get a good night's sleep on that flight. You're in the air anywhere from 6 to 10 hours, you arrive when it's about 2:00 a.m. at home, but 9:00 a.m. there, and it takes days to get over the jetlag. Anyway, just before getting on this plane, Tom found a place to sit and wait in the gate area. He noticed another passenger totally engrossed in a book entitled *How to Stop Snoring*. When everyone boarded the plane, the man reading this book took the seat next to Tom. That man slept better than anyone else on the flight. Tom got no sleep because whatever tips this guy was reading in that book did not help. He snored louder than the engine of a John Deere. It was like trying to sleep next to a wood chipper.

Nothing beats a good night's sleep. Some people never get one. They stay up late. They wake up during the night. They read or work or watch TV for a while. They go back to bed. The morning comes and they start the day without feeling rested. Others are blessed with better rest. They sleep through the night and wake up refreshed.

Things happen that make sleep difficult. If a child is out too late, the parents worry through the night. If you have an argument with someone you love, it is hard to sleep next to them. If you are concerned about your money, your job or your safety, you will toss and turn.

Other times it's hard to sleep because of something good. You stay up late at a dance, a party, or a sporting event because it is so much fun you wish it would never end. The Easter Vigil mass on Holy Saturday night starts late and goes late because it tries to create that sense of delight within us. We are so happy to celebrate our faith in the resurrection that we stay up at night and wish that our time of prayer would never end.

Ordinarily, a good night's sleep means all is well. Today's responsorial psalm carries this message. The person who first sang it was distressed and was praying to God for help. The psalm is confident: "Know that the Lord does wonders for his faithful one; the Lord will hear me when I call upon him." And it makes this petition: "Lord, let your face shine on us." It ends in confidence again: "You put gladness into my heart. As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling." The person who wrote this psalm got a good night's sleep because God was there protecting in times of distress.

We sing this psalm during the Easter season because sleep resembles death. When Jesus faced the distress of the grave, he could have said these same words: "As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling."

There are many things that may keep us from getting a good night's sleep, but one thing helps, having confidence that God will protect us. When we trust in God, we go to sleep at peace, ready to give praise the next day. When we trust in God we have no fear of death, for it is the sleep from which we will wake to praise God day after day.