

Easter Victory!

As published in the San Antonio Express-News

Archbishop José H. Gomez, S.T.D.
March 31, 2007

Last November, I celebrated Mass for courageous men and women in the military who had been wounded in battle. Emotions ran deep as I prayed with them and their families. I was profoundly inspired by the love and support given to them by their families, their courage, and most importantly, their faith.

At a time when war and terrorism darken our world and have shattered the dreams of many, I could see beyond the wounds and suffering, and was reminded of the great healing power of God's love and mercy.

More recently, our community was deeply wounded when two innocent babies lives were discarded in an unspeakable way. Yet, as I celebrated their funeral Mass, the Mass of Resurrection, I saw once again how God's love and mercy are victorious over sadness and outrage. In the faith and love of those in that Southside Church, I could see God's healing power at work in their hearts.

As we prepare to celebrate Holy Week and Easter, Christians rejoice in the greatest sign of God's love and mercy for all mankind, the resurrection of Jesus. Pope Benedict XVI in his 2006 Easter message to the world, proclaimed: "Today, even in this modern age marked by anxiety and uncertainty, we live the event of the resurrection, which changed the face of our life and changed the history of humanity". The resurrection is not simply an event of the past it is the core of the Christian's faith. It defines who we are, how we understand God, how we view life and death, and how we live with one another.

It's a great temptation to surrender to the evil around us with a deep sense of helplessness, fear and dread, but when we peer into Easter's empty tomb, we are encouraged to "Not be Afraid". The Resurrection is God's eternal sign to all of humanity that evil does not win when we trust in Him.

Easter is the affirmation that Jesus came to save us from the evil we do to one another and the good things we fail to do. In my pastoral letter, "The Tender Mercy of Our God", I recently wrote about how "we no longer have to be slaves to our selfishness and our sins. With God's help, we can strive every day to leave behind our old lives and become more like Jesus". He brought us the great gift of forgiveness.

Easter is a time of explosive joy. We hear it in every "Alleluia". It is a cosmic event that transcends all explanation. Yet, Easter is also a moment of absolute

stillness, a breathless moment when we are happily surprised by the realization that everything has changed and anything is possible in God's name.

On Good Friday, the people of San Fernando Cathedral will transform the streets of San Antonio into the "Way of the Cross" in its annual "Passion Play". It is my hope that as a city, we will recognize the evil that weighs heavy on Jesus as he journeys towards Calvary. Yet, beyond the cross there is Easter Sunday, the ultimate sign that evil does not win. Let this Holy Week wipe away the anger and the guilt, and leave behind the hope and resolve to embrace the Grace of the resurrection that will empower each of us to be an instrument of God's peace.

As we wish one another Happy Easter, let us reflect on the words of Pope John Paul II as he reminded us that evil will never win, when he said, "Despite all the powerful forces of poverty and oppression, of evil and sin in all their forms, the power of truth will prevail-the truth about God, the truth about man".