



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Homily for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord April 13, 2014

If we look at the events recounted in today's gospel readings through the eyes of children, what do we see? Will we also not ask a child's perennial question over and over again: Why?!

At the beginning of Mass Jesus rides into our lives seated on a donkey. Why does he enter Jerusalem in this way? Why not an impressive horse with a whole army? For two reasons. First, he comes, not as a great military hero but, rather, as a humble servant. Like the Servant of the Lord, he will gently bring forth "justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street" (Is 42:1-2). Second, the ancient kings of Israel used to ride donkeys. So now, we begin to see Jesus riding into our lives as God sees him – with the eyes of faith: Jesus is the Son of David, the royal Messiah, and the crowds greet him as such.

But then in the Passion Narrative the crowd turns against Jesus and asks for the release of Barabbas, a rebel leader who fought against the Roman occupation army. Jesus, however, is meek and humble, silent, and it may even seem that he is weak, not at all powerful. Why does he let people bully him?! Like the Servant in the reading from the Book of Isaiah, he gave his back to those who beat him, his cheeks to those who pulled on his beard, his face to those who hit and spit at him.

Why?! Because the suffering Lord Jesus unites himself with all the suffering people of the world – through the centuries. Even though he was God, St. Paul tells us, he emptied himself and took the form of a human being – with all its weaknesses – someone like us in all things but sin. This same Lord Jesus prayed in the Garden of

Gethsemane lying prostrate on the ground: “My soul is sorrowful even to death” and asks his heavenly Father to allow him to avoid the passion, crucifixion, and death. But he ends his prayer by fully accepting the Father’s will. It was not easy! It was very hard! On the Cross Jesus cries out “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?!”

His heavenly Father did **not** abandon him. God so loved the world that he sent his beloved Son into the world, not only to be fully human like us, but to serve others, being obedient to his Father’s will to death, even death on a cross. Why? This is a great mystery! How can we explain the Father’s incredible love for us? It is not because we are pure and virtuous, or because we are creative and productive, or because we are rich and powerful. We are sinners – sinners! -- but God loves us so very, very much. He never abandons us! His love for us is faithful, unconditional, eternal. All we can do is allow Jesus to come into our lives -- accompany us on our journey -- teach us how to walk in God’s ways.

A careful reading of Matthew’s Passion Narrative reveals that Jesus is actually **in control** of the awful events of his passion, crucifixion, and death. Everything is happening according to God’s will as revealed in the Old Testament. Indeed, Jesus’ death holds a very special place in God’s plan for the salvation of the human family.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us draw near to the Lord Jesus and walk with him during this holiest of years – on Holy Thursday, on Good Friday, at the Easter Vigil, and on Easter Sunday. Today, our cry *Viva Cristo Rey!* is softened because of the awesome events we will celebrate this Holy Week. In faith, hope, and love, let us humbly accompany our divine Savior and his Sorrowful Mother in his passion, death and resurrection! *Viva Cristo Rey!*