



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Pro-Life Mass January 19, 2014

It is often said that the green we wear during this ordinary time symbolizes the hope of our life in Christ. Like the green of new growth in the spring conquering the cold and the death of winter. We grow week by week, day by day in Christ, and so it is appropriate today to reflect on the sanctity of that life Christ has given us, and the victory of life over death.

In our Gospel passage this morning, John the Baptist recalls his encounter with Jesus out in the desert when the savior came to begin his ministry by his baptism. John had been waiting for this moment, when the promised one would come. Our God, "the one who had sent him to baptize with water", had promised him that he would see the Spirit rest on one whom he baptized. So, when Jesus came up out of the water and the Spirit rested upon him, he knew that this would be the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. And so John told his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John knew that he had witnessed the dawn of the age of new life in Christ Jesus, the Holy One of God.

The grace of Jesus had come into the world. Just a few decades later Paul greets the church at Corinth, those who had followed the way of Christ and had been baptized in water and the Holy Spirit. He greets them who now have put on new life and had "been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy", just as Jesus is Holy. The new life given by Jesus had brought the human race back to God. Once more

all who call upon the Lord are one with him. This is truly good news, and a cause to rejoice. For us, life has conquered death. But our God, in his love for us all, did not stop there.

God's great plan for the whole of humanity can be seen even in ancient times. His words to the Prophet Isaiah, for instance, show us that his divine life was never just for us who believe and call upon his name. "It is too little, the Lord says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." We are not just called to receive the light of life for ourselves only, but we who have been called to holiness in Christ must share that light with all nations. The God who "formed us as his servants from the womb" has called us not so we could simply sit in the sanctuary keeping his light for our own, but to share that light with the world. The response of the call to holiness must be, "Here am I, Lord; I come to your will."

We are here united in the truth that God is the God of life. We bear witness to the light of life, and we continue to stand for the Gospel of life and the dignity of all, rejecting any darkness masquerading as the light. In a special way today we stand for the lives of our children. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, stated it clearly in his recent address to the Vatican diplomatic corp: "It is horrific even to think that there are children, victims of abortion, who will never see the light of day; children being used as soldiers, abused and killed in armed conflicts; and children being bought and sold in that terrible form of modern slavery which is human trafficking, which is a crime against humanity."

It is easy to see that the truth is of vital importance to all of society and for all peoples in all phases of life, from conception to natural death. We have good news to share with everyone that echoes in logic, reason, and natural law so that it can be accessed by anyone. However we must recognize that there is no small section of the world that disagrees with us on these truths that we see so clearly. It is very tempting to dismiss their disagreement as "their problem". If we are truly pro-life, then we must have concern for the life of all who do not see the light of the nations.

Pope Francis has demanded that we remember this as we communicate with the world. In his recent exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he said: "Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but 'by attraction.'" We preach life as people of joy, people of hope. There is no room for angry proselytizing in the pro-life message. This is the challenge. We must attract people with the joy and beauty of the message. Can you oppose the injustices of abortion or euthanasia joyfully? Is our way of standing for life itself lifegiving? These challenges should not intimidate or divide us, Instead, they drive us to greater growth in holiness. They drive us to help baptize the culture around us while loving the people, our sisters and brothers, who live in that culture and also deserve the light of life that comes from God.

Here we are Lord, we come to do your will. Fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may share your life with the world.

Mary, Mother of life, intercede for our world so that the foundational gift of life may be honored by all.