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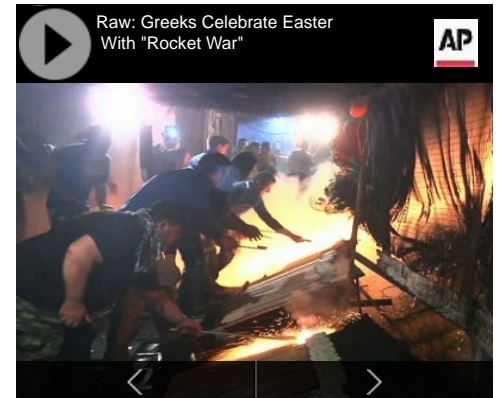
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## Walking in the footsteps of Jesus



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Miguel Dominguez portrays Jesus during St. Joseph's Catholic Passion Play off of Hub Morris Rd. 4.18.14. (PAUL CHURCH / THE COURIER-TRIBUNE)



Raw: Greeks Celebrate Easter With "Rocket War"



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By Julie Bates

Special to The Courier-Tribune

ASHEBORO — More than 1,000 people gathered Friday to watch the suffering of their savior.

They assembled on a vacant tract of land in north Asheboro where Saint Joseph's Catholic Church parishioners plan to build a church.



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Parentslifted small children onto their shoulders so that they could see the events unfold step by step — from Christ’s condemnation by Pontius Pilate, to the brutal crucifixion, and to his resurrection from the dead.

“They are participating with the journey of Jesus,” said Father Phillip of Saint Joseph’s. “It is a powerful journey. When they reenact all the scenes, participants will identify with Jesus and pray along the way. It’s a triumphal reflection on what Jesus went through. We do Stations of the Cross at the church every Friday during Lent. At all the holding stations, we walk around and pray.”

The Stations of the Cross are a Catholic tradition that began with Francis of Assisi. Also known as the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Suffering), they take participants up to Golgotha and to the tomb. The journey highlights Christ’s suffering and his sacrifice. It is often performed during Lent, most frequently on Good Friday.

Julio Ruiz has coordinated this production in Asheboro for the past two years because he feels it is something that the community needed. They unite over it.

“Easter is all about Jesus,” said Jose Palma, who portrayed a Roman soldier. “Jesus came back to life. He is everything for us. The main way of living should be Jesus to everybody. That is what Easter is for me and why we all get together to do this to remember Jesus every day.”

It was a sentiment echoed by others working to prepare for the event. Isidoro Fuentes is a coordinator for the Latino community. He explains his commitment this way, “With this production we are trying to give one reflection about our faith. We’re trying to reveal that what Jesus did in the past, we show what he does for us (now).”

Maricouz Palma sang two songs in the production. For her, Easter is a time to remember what Jesus did. “It was a sacrifice that he went through for me to be free,” she said. “It takes me farther into loving God.”

The air was cold Friday morning as members of the church and the Latino community converged at the church site off Hub Morris Road. Soon the horses were being led in. The sun glinted off soldiers’ helmets and breastplates. Soon Jesus’ followers and accusers came to life.

Excitement built as the large crowd filled areas roped off for the public. It was Earl Nilsson’s first visit to the event. He had heard that it did not get much more real than the drama that was about to unfold. He was excited, enough to brave the chill to experience the event firsthand. “This is important in history,” he said. “There was a sacrifice here and he did it for us so it’s very important.”

The action commenced. Forewarned by dramatic music, the audience watched Jesus being manhandled by Roman soldiers as he was brought to Pilate’s palace. Incited by the Pharisees, the crowds screamed bloodcurdling abuse as Christ stood before Pilate. Within moments Barabbas was free and Jesus led away to be scourged.

As the soldiers beat him, watchers hushed, crowding in to witness the spectacle in near silence broken only by the sound of cameras and the crackle of the sound system. A soloist sang mournfully.

At the next station, Jesus took up his cross, an event mentioned in all four gospels. He fell at the third station and the soldiers whipped him. At the fourth, he met his grieving mother, and then Simon of Cyrene aided him in carrying the heavy wooden instrument of death. All the while the drama moved up the mountain to Calvary.

Jesus fell again and again until he reached his destination. He was stripped of his garments and put on the cross along with two thieves, his companions in death.

Thunder sounded as the crowd witnessed his torturous end. As drums beat, the dead were removed from their crosses. Jesus rested in his mother’s arms as she sobbed. A haunting voice sang. The audience swelled against the ropes, taking it all in.

Jesus’ body was placed in the tomb and the singing continued as Mary and her companions were led away. In silence broken only by the cries of birds, a lone soldier guarded the tomb. Wind rose, followed by a whispering voice. The soldier prayed. Thunder rumbled and Jesus emerged from the tomb.

The audience applauded.

Jesus’ followers gathered at the foot of the cross to pray as he joined them. The drama ended with one of his followers preaching while Jesus stood behind him.

And then they went out into the world.

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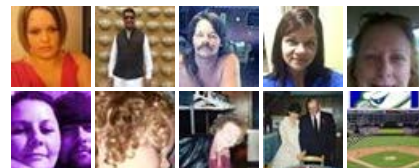
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