

December 28th: Holy Innocents

Gospel for December 28th, feast of the Holy Innocents, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 2:13-18*)

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This

was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.”

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they were no more.”

Commentary

What a sudden change! The Three Wise Men arrive from the East and shower the child with gifts worthy of a king, and soon afterwards the angel of the Lord tells Joseph to flee to a distant land with Mary and the Child, because another king wants to kill him. Human reason so often doesn't understand God's plans, which seem to contradict one another. On the one hand, so many manifestations of his goodness, and on the other, so much suffering and evil around us, and problems that disrupt the plans we have made with an upright intention.

All of this demands our prayer, and a deeper union with God. We need to have a humble, generous and self-sacrificing disposition, and be ready to fulfill what God asks of us.

Sometimes we will have to give up our own judgment and put aside noble ambitions, in order to place

our will at the service of what God asks, even when we find it arduous and even humanly inexplicable, because God knows best. Although he didn't understand what was happening that night when he had to wake up Mary and flee with the Child, later on Joseph would remember the words of the prophet Hosea: "Out of Egypt I have called my son" (*Hos* 11:1).

Herod's rage and his desire to kill the Child reveals the sterility of those who decree the death of God. God is the Lord of life and death. The incarnate God dies when he wants, offering his life for the redemption of many. Faced with inexplicable events that mark human existence, one's understanding can rebel and opt for a practical atheism. But this leads in the end only to undermining human reason and robbing it of light, and thus sowing desolation. And this is how today's Gospel passage ends,

with Rachel's inconsolable grief for her children.

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