

**God's Victory over Evil**  
1 Jn 1:5—2:2; Mt 2:13-18  
(our true goal: life with God.)

**The Holy Innocents** Monday, December 28, 2015  
(Ruthless dictators and paranoiac maniacs cannot deprive us of

Today we are reading from the Gospel according to Matthew, the so-called infancy narrative. Now there are two infancy narratives, one in Matthew, one in Luke, nothing at all in Mark or John. The truth is none of the evangelists knew anything about the infancy of Jesus except that he was born and he grew up in Nazareth, and that much is for sure, nothing else.

Now this story about Herod is very interesting. There is an aspect of truth, but not exactly in the way it's told. There was a man named Herod, but he was not a king. There was a man named Herod who was a Jew, but who was the Roman governor. He was paranoid—that's true, and he was ruthless in killing off all the people he thought wanted his job—that's true. There was such a man, but he wasn't king. Whether he really killed babies is quite unlikely.

Where does the idea come from? **The idea comes from the Old Testament.** All this is what is called *midrash*. **It is rewriting, reworking stories from the past. So you heard of the story of Moses who was drawn from the reeds.** His name means “drawn from the reeds,” and it is an Egyptian name. The story is he was drawn from the reeds because he was put there by his sister to protect him from the midwives that were told to throw the boys into the river, the Nile. Now, again, did this actually happen? Nobody knows for sure. But it is the basis for this that the **people who are rulers fear for their power and therefore act in this ruthless way.**

But we don't have to worry about whether actually the pharaoh killed boys or not. We don't have to worry about whether the governor Herod killed boys or not. **We know that there is ruthlessness in the world, and we know there are innocent victims in the world.** That is really a very important point because the **Church's take on this** is that in spite of the fact that there seems to be this **massacre of innocents**, their lives are not really lost. Quite the opposite,

**their lives are crowned with martyrdom.** They are in fact brought into an intimate relation with Christ. They are claimed to be martyrs, **even though they never spoke a thing or made a choice.**

So we have to keep this in mind when we hear of tragedies and the death of innocents. We may become very depressed; we might become very despondent and despairing. That is not really the Christian way. **God is far greater than we are and is able to draw good out of every kind of disaster and evil.** So we have to keep in mind that the goal of our lives is not life here; it is not the goal. **The goal of life is life with God.** And ruthless dictators and paranoiac maniacs cannot deprive us of our true goal. They can take away our lives. They can take away our livelihoods, but they cannot deprive us of the true goal for which we are born, which is to live with God. So the feast is, after all, **a celebration of God's victory and God's power to overcome human evil and malice and ruthlessness.** From that viewpoint we can continue to keep alive this idea of the Holy Innocents.