Jesu Juva

**The Second Sunday after Christmas / The Feast of the Holy Innocents**

Text: St. Matthew 2:13-23

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

During our celebration of the Feast of the Holy Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we rejoiced at the fulfillment and birth of the promise God gave us in the Garden of Eden. Paraments and Vestments were of gold, reminding us of the glory of God made manifest in the birth of His only begotten Son, who is Emmanuel, that is, God with us, come to save us from sin, Satan, and the grave. The events of that first Christmas filled God’s people with hope in the promise of salvation and the life to come. But that was Christmas.

The very day following we were faced with the blood-red of the altar paraments and Eucharistic vestments marking the martyrdom of Saint Stephen. With Stephen and the whole Church on earth, we faced the stark reality that the path of faith which Jesus has laid out before us is no easy one; Satan and the world hate Christ and all those who hear His voice and believe.

Today, we are again faced with brutality and blood. It seems there are no limits to man’s inhumanity to his fellow man—even tender age will not stay a tyrant’s cruel sword. So, Rachel weeps and will not be comforted. She mourns and laments, for Her children are no more. Their blood crying out from the ground echoes down through the halls of time. The love of God does not dwell in the sinful hearts of men from which cruelty and murder proceed. Satan, Herod, and the unbelieving world demand Jesus’ blood and if they cannot have it, they will be happy to have the blood of those who follow Him. The Christ is born to make all mankind holy by removing all sin and reconciling humanity to God, but man will not have it and the world still perishes from sin and death.

Having been warned by an angel in a dream, Joseph took the toddler, Jesus, and His blessed virgin mother to Egypt in the dead of night, and there they remained until the danger was past. Herod, in a rage over what he perceived to be the deception of the Magi, ordered all male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding region, who were two years of age and younger, to be slaughtered.

Today, such an atrocity seems unthinkable. Such a crime would instantly cause an uprising and loud demands for justice. There would be investigations and trials. We are civilized, or so we claim, and we care for and love our children. We feed, clothe, and comfort them. We soothe their hurts, real and imagined, and we dry their tears. We attempt to keep them from all harm. Or do we? Are we really all that different from Herod?

Well, surely, that is our claim, but our actions, or should I say inactions, speak far more loudly than our words. The scalpel of an abortionist is no less lethal than the sword of Herod’s henchmen. To paraphrase 1 Samuel 18:7, *“Herod has killed his hundreds; We have killed our tens of millions.”* For such barbarism, we must repent. We must seek God’s forgiveness and mercy. We must labor tirelessly to end the murder of the unborn among us. A child in a mother’s womb is not simply a lump of cells, nor is a child in a mother’s womb simply a promise of what might become human. A child in a mother’s womb is just that, a child. He or she has a brain, a heart, two eyes and ears, arms, hands, legs, and feet, and as much a will to live as you or I. More importantly, that child has a soul. To destroy a child before he or she has had a chance to even draw his or her first breathe is no less a crime than putting a toddler to the sword.

God sees. God knows. The blood of over 60 million aborted infants cries out from the ground to Heaven against us and the God sent to Egypt to protect Him, the God who escaped Herod’s blade will one day return to be our Judge.

Yet, I do not ask you to mourn but to hold on to the promise of the Gospel. The prophet, Jeremiah, the very same who foretold the bloody atrocity we commemorate this day, has said, *“Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears.”* Through the Child saved your sins have been forgiven you and you have nothing to fear.

Yes, today we remember the Holy Innocents, but we do so in the light of Christ with the sure and certain knowledge that while the Lord they died for was spared for a time, He too gave His life for the life of the world and in His death is the remission of all your sins. In His death and resurrection, eternal life is made yours. It is you of whom the Prophet writes, *“they shall come back from the land of the enemy.”* With His Blood, Christ has redeemed you. It is given on the altar for the forgiveness of your sins.

Dear ones, there truly is hope in your future. Jesus has gone on before you to prepare a place for you in Heaven. There, the holy martyrs, made holy in the Blood of Christ, await your arrival. There, the God of our fathers awaits you. There, eternal life awaits you. What Christ has won for you is yours—now, but not yet.

The Holy Innocents died that night that Jesus would escape and return to die for them. His Martyrdom, His innocent suffering, and death liberated them out of this living death and relieved them early of their burdens. It was not as it may have appeared that their lives were exchanged for His. It was His Life given in exchange for theirs. What Herod meant for evil God meant for good. Herod delivered them to heaven, peace, and joy without measure. They praised God not by speaking but by dying. Their lives were emptied of themselves and filled with Him.

Yes, sin does stand in stark contrast to the beauty and peace which is ours in the Christ Child, the Son of God. Sin does threaten the peace which passes all understanding. Still, we are sons and daughters of the Living God and brothers and sisters to the Babe of Bethlehem. In Him, we find our peace as we forever make Him the center of our adoration. Jesus Christ is King and declares, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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