

Holy Innocents

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Jer 31:1-6, 15-16

Second Lesson: Matt 18:1-14

Homily

Words of the prophet Jeremiah:

*“A voice was heard in Ramah,
lamentation, and bitter weeping;
Rachel weeping for her children
refused to be comforted for her children,
because they were not.”*

St. Matthew quoted these words in the passage read as the Gospel in today's Mass.
He applied them to the horrible event that we are remembering today.

King Herod,
on hearing of a new-born king in Bethlehem,
in his insecurity and his greed for power,
decided to make sure that such a rival
would never grow up to threaten him
So it was that he had all the baby boys
in that general area slaughtered.

These are the Innocents we remember
so soon after the joy of Christmas.
This is a sinful, rebellious world.
The powers of evil and Fallen mankind
can always be counted on
to oppose God when He shows Himself.
Nothing enrages Satan more than
the evidence of God's love.
Nothing pleases him more
than to answer that love with hatred,
with cruelty, with pain.

And there was weeping.
Imagine the pain of all those mothers.
weep with them.
It's only right that we should.

Yet, in this same passage we hear
some of the most comforting words ever spoken:

*“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me,
saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”*

In the midst of evils,
God calls us to remember that He is with us,
that He has always loved us,

that He spoke our names
 at the beginning of creation,
 always reaches His hand toward us,
 and always calls us to Himself.
 His love is everlasting

But yet, the evil that fills this world
 is always present, always working,
 and will be until the end of the age.
 And one of the messages of this day
 is that it is so often the children that pay.
 It may be that it is the very existence
 of innocence
 that so enrages the servants of evil,
 and so often leads to such horrors.

Jesus certainly valued the children.
 More than once he held them up
 as an example of the very things He preached,
 as He did in today's second lesson,
 from St. Matthew,
 when he set a child in the midst of his men,
 and said:

*“Except ye be converted,
 and become as little children,
 ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself*

*as this little child,
 the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
 And whoso shall receive one such little child
 in my name -- receiveth me.”*

Learn from the children.
 Value the children.
 Receive the children,
 and you receive Me.
 That's what Our Lord said,
 and that's what He meant.

And yet ...
 we rebellious humans so often,
 so very often,
 see children as a nuisance,
 perhaps a danger,
 a plague to be prevented,
 a difficulty to be removed.

We sympathize with those women
 whose babies were taken from them,
 but (speaking of the society we live in),
 we make abortion perfectly legal.
 We suffer the deliberate killing of millions --
 yes, many millions,
 of unborn children,
 and tell the mothers to be glad,

to feel relief,
 that they are freed from a burden.
 And we discard the unborn
 as though they were never part of humanity,
 as though they were not children of God.

But hear what else Our Lord said:

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones ...”

And what greater offense than this?
 He continued:

*“... it were better for him that a millstone
 were hanged about his neck,
 and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

Children are a gift from the Lord.
 When a child is conceived,
 when the DNA of a man and a woman
 combines into a new genetic pattern,
 and begins to grow,
 this is a human child,
 to be valued,
 to be welcomed,
 to be received with joy.

Anything less is a direct insult

to the Lord who made us all,
 who loves us all,
 who calls us all,
 and desires to love us forever.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, who hast blessed us
 with the joy and care of children; Give us light and
 strength to welcome them, to rejoice in them, and so
 to train them, that they may love whatsoever things
 are true and pure and lovely and of good report,
 following the example of their Saviour Jesus Christ.
 Amen.

Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Isa 54:1-13

Second Lesson: Mark 10:13-16, 23-31

Homily to be written