December 28th: Feast of the Holy Innocents, martyrs

Gospel text (*Mt* 2:13-18): When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.

”Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt“

Fr. Joan Pere PULIDO i Gutiérrez
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Today, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents, martyrs. Embedded within the Christmas celebrations, we cannot ignore the message the liturgy wants to convey to us clarifying two main points regarding the good news of the birth of Jesus. In the first place, St. Joseph's predisposition in God's design for our salvation, by accepting God's will. And, secondly, the evil, the injustice we often find in our life, determined in this case by the martyrdom of those innocent infants. All this requires a personal and social attitude and response.

St. Joseph offers us a very clear and responsive testimony to God's call. We can, thus, identify ourselves with him when we are to take decisions, from our own faith, in difficult moments of our life: “Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt” (Mt 2:14).

Our faith in God entails our own life. It wakes us up, that is, makes us fully alert to those things happening around us, because —quite often— it is where God speaks to us. He makes us take the child and His mother, i.e., God becomes closer, our travel companion, and He strengthens our faith, hope and charity. And He makes us leave at night for Egypt, i.e. He invites us to not be afraid of our own life, which, more often than not, is full of shadows too difficult to illuminate.

Today, those infant martyrs also have specific names of other infants, youngsters, old people, immigrants, ailing persons... requesting the response of our charity. Saint John Paul II told us: “In our own time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer.”

Let us hope that the clear and strong new light from God Infant fills up our lives and reaffirms our faith, our hope and our charity.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Why do you fear, Herod, when you hear that a King has been born? (...). You kill the body of children because fear has killed your heart” (Saint Quodvultdeus)

- “The Son of God —the eternal Word— has become a child so that God is within our reach. He thus teaches us to love the little ones; to love the weak; to respect children.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: ‘He came to his own home, and his own people received him not’ (Jn 1:11). Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 530)