

Reflection Holy Innocents Christmas Octave 2020

The Holy Innocents are the children who were slaughtered at the orders of King Herod, in the hope that by killing every boy born in Bethlehem at the same time as Jesus, he would succeed in killing the new-born King of the Jews. None of these baby boys deserved death. They had no chance to do anything, or be anyone, or become anyone. Each child had done nothing bad, nor anything good. Each was born and then died. The question can be asked how they could be called “martyrs”. St Stephen (the day before yesterday), insisted on preaching the truth until his hearers stoned him for it. St Thomas Becket (tomorrow) insisted on living the truth until his king had him killed because of it. These children did not insist on anything except their mothers’ milk. Unlike Stephen and Thomas, there was no voluntary act of theirs that marks them out for being martyred or not being martyred. So, there is a question mark about these children and that is one reason why God inspired the Church to celebrate this feast – to show us how often inadequate is rational, worldly-wise thoughts. Babies may not rank high on the scale but neither do sparrows, and yet God has told us that God sees and counts every one of those. The Holy Innocents can stand, therefore, for all those considered to be “unimportant” or “unnecessary” - child and adult alike. Those who can be sacrificed for some greater good because they “don’t really matter”; the eggs broken to make an omelette... or even broken to make nothing at all. There are plenty of them, one way or another. The feast of the Holy Innocents reminds us that in God’s eyes, *no-one* is unimportant, *no-one* is unnecessary, *no-one* “doesn’t really matter.” However meaningless their lives and deaths may seem to us, they shine glorious in heaven. The honour given to the Holy Innocents reminds us that if we suffer or even die for God’s sake, it has value even if we have little or no say in it ourselves. Honouring them effectively honours also the martyrdom of the people these children could have become, and their children’s children as well; and, at the same time, we can remember the contemporary and continuing massacre of those who die before birth for the convenience of those who have them killed. (Anon)

1. What did **baby** corn say to **mama** corn? Where is **pop** corn?
2. Where do baby ghosts go during the day? Daycare centres.
3. Why did the baby cry at 1am, 3am, and 5am? Why not?