

The Holy Innocents and Herod - the Insidiousness of Evil

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.

“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.” (Mt 2:16-19)

Matthew is the only evangelist who recounts the “Massacre of the Holy Innocents.” Why? We recall that Matthew’s Gospel is esteemed as the most quoted Gospel, that he was a Jew from Cana in Galilee where Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch during most of Jesus’ life. Matthew would have grown up with the stories of Herod’s father’s cruelties, for Herod the Great, the Roman client king of Judea who ordered the Massacre of the Holy Innocents, was considered a madman. Matthew was also writing for a Jewish audience and constantly showed how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the New Testament; hence the reference to Rachel weeping for her children. He also focused on the “anawim,” the poor and the lowly, and saw fit to include the story other historians thought too insignificant to cover, for it concerned the murder of innocent babies of poor peasant people in the lowly towns of Bethlehem and the surrounding areas. Matthew is ascertained to be some years older than Jesus and therefore was a child or teenager at the time of Jesus’ birth, the Massacre of the Holy Innocents and the death of Herod the Great. When the leader of a country orders infants to be killed, you can be sure the people talk about and remember such an event. Matthew would most certainly have remembered this event and it would have made a strong impression on him, a child hearing about the mass murder of innocent children. It was most assuredly an unforgettable part of his personal history.

There are some who try to say that the Massacre of the Holy Innocents never took place, citing the fact that the Hebrew historian Flavius Josephus does not mention it. Others want to claim that there is no historical credibility in Matthew’s Gospel. The truth is otherwise. Although the Scriptures are primarily a holy book about God’s revelation, they contain a great deal of history and are examined by many historians as a reference to their own views. Matthew’s account would be historically accurate for the reasons already stated. Over the years stories from various nations abounded about thousands of babies being killed in Bethlehem. Several sources claim the number was quite small. In *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, an Orthodox Jew who became an Anglican priest, Chapter 8 of this book, written in 1883, says this on the massacre.

As always in the history of Christ, so here also, glory and suffering appear in juxtaposition. It could not be, that these Magi should become

the innocent instruments of Herod's murderous designs; nor yet that the Infant-Saviour should fall a victim to the tyrant. Warned of God in a dream, the 'wise men' returned 'into their own country another way;' and, warned by the angel of the Lord in a dream, the Holy Family sought temporary shelter in Egypt. Baffled in the hope of attaining his object through the Magi, the reckless tyrant sought to secure it by an indiscriminate slaughter of all the children in Bethlehem and its immediate neighborhood, from two years and under. True, considering the population of Bethlehem, their number could only have been small, probably twenty at most.⁶⁵ But the deed was none the less atrocious; and these infants may justly be regarded as the 'protomartyrs,' the first witnesses, of Christ, 'the blossom of martyrdom' ('flores martyrum,' as *Prudentius* calls them). The slaughter was entirely in accordance with the character and former measures of Herod.⁶⁶ Nor do we wonder that it remained unrecorded by Josephus, since on other occasions also he has omitted events which to us seem important.⁶⁷ The murder of a few infants in an insignificant village might appear scarcely worth notice in a reign stained by so much bloodshed. Besides, he had, perhaps, a special motive for this silence. Josephus always carefully suppresses, so far as possible, all that refers to the Christ⁶⁸ - probably not only in accordance with his own religious views, but because mention of a Christ might have been dangerous, certainly would have been inconvenient, in a work written by an intense self-seeker, mainly for readers in Rome.

Reference: http://philologos.org/__eb-lat/book202.htm

Craig Blomberg, Professor of the New Testament at Denver Theological Seminary in Colorado refutes a more recent *National Geographic's* article claiming the Massacre never happened.

What makes the *National Geographic* report's statement all the more unfortunate is that it comes right in the context of fairly detailed recounting of Josephus' reports of all the cruelty and executions Herod did manufacture. Increasingly paranoid as he got older about supposed threats to his "throne," he had several of his sons and wives put to death. It would be one thing if Josephus gave one kind of portrait of Herod and Matthew a quite different one, but both sources agree entirely on Herod's ruthlessness and the specific manner it most manifested itself—repeated murders of those even slightly perceived to be a threat to his power. Reports that a boy had been born with the right ancestral credentials to reign over Israel would easily have threatened this megalomaniac from Idumea who wasn't even a Jew by birth and would never have survived the installment of someone with the right lineage.

Blomberg further states that Josephus did not record this event because, like other historians of his day, he was concerned with events related to kings and queens and important people, not ordinary peasants. Matthew, on the other hand, was intent on showing God's concern for His little ones and this neglect of the secular world merits all the more attention by him for that reason.

Reference: <http://www.canonglenn.com/category/holy-innocents/>

The Catholic Encyclopedia speaks thus on the Holy Innocents:

This cruel deed of Herod is not mentioned by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although he relates quite a number of atrocities committed by the king during the last years of his reign. The number of these children was so small that this crime appeared insignificant amongst the other misdeeds of Herod. Macrobius (Saturn., IV, xiv, de Augusto et josis ejus) relates that when Augustus heard that amongst the boys of two years and under Herod's own son also had been massacred, he said: "It is better to be Herod's hog [ous], than his son [houios]," alluding to the Jewish law of not eating, and consequently not killing, swine. (Later references identify this son as the adult son of Herod whom he had killed for aspiring to the throne.)

Reference: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07419a.htm>

In contrast we read the account of the Massacre in the visions of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich which describes the cunning, insane Herod luring Hebrew families from seven districts around Jerusalem into the city on the pretense of being rewarded for their fruitfulness. On arriving the men were sent home and the women imprisoned in two adjacent buildings that had another structure between and a huge courtyard. Blessed Anne Catherine describes soldiers calling the women, one by one, tearing their children from them and then taking the children to the courtyard where they stabbed them to death and tossed their precious little bodies on a heap to be buried in a trench later. All this was done with Herod looking on. One can only imagine "the weeping of Rachel for her children who are no more" in the screams and cries of these women so deceived and anguished, alone without their husbands. Blessed Anne Catherine speaks of many children being killed from all these areas. She also mentions that Elizabeth and Zachary had been warned by an angel and by a messenger from Mary to flee the area. So Elizabeth took John the Baptist to a cave in the wilderness where he became so familiar with life there, he stayed, never to be contaminated by the world. **While we can be quite sure the Massacre took place, we cannot be so sure just how many babies were actually killed. Knowing Herod's demonic and evil personality, we can only imagine how he vented his rage upon the innocent children of Israel. The deed was atrocious no matter how many or how few the babies were.** Knowing that Holy Mother Church has put this feast on the liturgical calendar so close to the birth of Jesus confirms the conviction that the children of Israel were the first to give up their lives for the Lord.

On December 28th, around 485, the Western Church established the feast of the Holy Innocents as the first martyrs for Christ, they who died not only for Christ but in His place. St. Matthew connects the weeping of these poor mothers of those murdered babies to that of Rachel, wife of Jacob, who was buried in Ramah where the remnants of the nation of Israel were gathered after the destruction of Jerusalem and before being led away into the Babylonian captivity. Rachel was weeping from her grave for the children of Israel and for the banishment of the Messiah, son of David, who would be led away, too, from his homeland to exile in the pagan land of Egypt. Rachel is a figure

of Mary, weeping for her children today, for the Church and the family are under grave persecution from evil forces equal to those of Herod but far more subtle. Rachel is also a symbol of Mary weeping for all those innocent children murdered in the womb in our day, a deed that violates the Natural Law that is written in the heart of humankind and every parent and demands that they protect their offspring. This evil deed of abortion which is sanctioned by human law is also contrary to Divine Law and the true teachings of Holy Mother Church. Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, the visionary of the “Our Lady of America®” message, was adamant that the sin of abortion, the murder of these holy innocents by their own parents today, is an evil so heinous to God that it is calling down the wrath of God upon our and all other nations who condone and legalize such killing, especially for profit. Does Our Lady not speak of chastisements hitherto unknown to us being visited upon us as God’s just response to a sinful generation?

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen distinguishes between bad people and evil people, saying that bad people do bad things, but **evil people attack goodness, innocence!** Given the atrocities of Herod the Great against people in general, and even his own family and those innocent babies of Israel, one can only conclude that Herod was an evil man. In a brief reading of the history of Josephus at the time of Christ’s birth, one must also conclude that Jesus was born into a world beset by terrible evils, wars, rulers ruthlessly killing other rulers, even family members, to attain power, betrayal of every sort, licentiousness, oppression of the poor, idolatry and adultery and impurity of every kind. Into such a world He was born, precisely to save it. Into our world, so much like the one He was born into, He now comes again, through His Mother, “Our Lady of America®” who has very strong words for us to warn us about the insidiousness of evil and the many errors and false teachings that abound in our day, precisely so she can save us, too, from their destructive consequences by bringing us to Her Divine Son for healing and salvation. Herod’s evil deeds were so manifold and so public there was no way one could not know them, but the evils of our day seem to be far more subtle and deceptive, and today’s evil doers far more like wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing, just as glamorous as kings, well educated and in powerful positions just like Herod, always oppressing the lowly and the poor. As Our Lady herself says, only the pure of heart can see evil for what it is and discern an evil spirit from a true spirit. Simple souls have such purity of heart.

Dear child, evil is so insidious that it often passes for good. The simple and pure of heart alone can detect the difference. Many good works and many a good person or persons are thwarted and destroyed by apparently good people who are manipulated by the powers of evil because they do not possess that finer sense of being able to detect a false spirit from a true one. (Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, Diary “Our Lady of America,®” Fostoria, OH, pg. 40, April 18, 1981.)

How utterly important it is for us to live in God’s spirit and close to His Heart if we are to have that purity of heart that enables us to discern evil spirits from good ones. How sad is the truth Our Lady states, that many good people are destroyed by other apparently good people who are manipulated by the powers of evil because they lack the finer sense of detecting a false spirit from a true one. Intellectual pride and ambition

for power and money too often get in the way. Our dear Lord adds His own words to Our Lady's warning:

My faithful spouse, the world does not know me. My people do not know me. I am a stranger to them. Many claim to love me yet hate and kill their neighbor and say they do it in My Name. These listen to the false prophets who are manipulated by the powers of evil. Me they do not follow, Me they do not hear. The Bible, the Gospels are to them just so many words that they throw out to those hungering to know about the real Christ who seeks their love, who holds out the true meaning of the Gospels, the only One who can lead them to the Father. With the same tongue with which these benighted souls praise and proclaim their love and dedication to Me they curse and condemn their neighbor whom I redeemed as I did them.

Many unnatural acts are being committed in the name of love. This evil is being disguised and tolerated as an intrinsic right like any other. Even some of My priests and consecrated virgins are being caught up into this web of evil, not realizing its terrible consequences.

My dearest one, many false doctrines are being taught and for many the true Christ is never made known. The false prophets and self-proclaimed Messiahs are drawing many away from Me, the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the true Messiah who was sent and the only one proclaimed as such by My Father. Seek Me for I only am truth, I only am the Christ. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®", pg. 40)

Neither Mary nor Jesus would speak to us of something that were not true. If they are addressing these evils, it is because they do, in fact, exist within our society and within our Church. Who are these **false prophets** of today that Jesus refers to? Who are these **benighted souls** who say one thing and do another? What **unnatural acts** being committed in the name of love is Jesus talking about? Why are these **unnatural acts** being disguised and **tolerated as if they were intrinsic rights, when they are not?** Who are the **priests and consecrated souls being caught up into this web of evil?** Who are the **self-proclaimed messiahs** drawing so many in their footsteps like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, taking so many away from the only true Messiah? Are we, like the Wise Men, the Magi of old, truly seeking the Lord, the promised One who is the Light of the world? Are we following **His** Star? Have we laid our hearts at His feet as surely as the Magi laid their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh at the feet of the Holy Infant of Bethlehem?

Just a few months before Our Lord's words, Our Lady spoke to Sister Mildred of the loss of meaning in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Beloved daughter, to many the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass no longer has meaning. These have lost that spiritual sensitivity of reaching out and touching the wounded hand of my Son. In a special

way, during the Holy Sacrifice Jesus comes in close contact with those who meet Him in a profound act of faith in a deep sense of His Divine and human presence. It is a great loss when one loses the spiritual sight of the son that the Father sent to guide us into the Eternal Vision. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®," pg. 40)

In 1982 and 1983 Our Lady spoke these words about disobedience to Christ's Vicar on earth to Sister Mildred:

Beloved daughter, sweet child, there are those in high places in the Church who disobey and refuse respect to my Son's Vicar on earth. These betray the teachings inspired by the Divine Spirit sent by my Son to be with the Church 'til the end of time.

There are those who teach false doctrines, and those who repudiate the Holy Sacraments. They are filled with intellectual pride. And so refusing to follow my humble Son, they are being destroyed together with those who misguidedly follow them down the path of error and falsehood. Pray for these poor ones who do not realize the misery and wretchedness they are in and to which they have and are leading others. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®," pg. 43)

These are strong and scary words! **There are those in high places in the Church who disobey and refuse respect to my Son's Vicar on earth. These betray the teachings inspired by the Divine Spirit sent by my Son to be with the Church 'til the end of time.** If we can't trust those in high places in the Church responsible to teach the Faith and true doctrines of the Church, who can we trust? Do we have the purity of heart to discern and identify those who betray the teachings inspired by the Holy Spirit? Are we being deceived by the very ones we are suppose to be able to trust? No wonder "Our Lady of America®" comes to warn us about great chastisements upon our Nation and all the world if we do not heed her call for a "reform of life." No wonder such vicious attacks have been made upon this devotion through the years, a devotion Our Lady herself said would crush the evil power of Satan because of this most essential doctrine of the Divine Indwelling in every soul. Sister Mildred Neuzil spoke of a "ring of evil" that would work against the true meaning and purity of this message. We see how some have removed the later part of the message without authorization and have confused the public with only a partial version of the whole message, deleting that part that identifies in such clear terms the current evils and heresies within the Church, the very errors Our Lady came to address and condemn in calling us to a radical "reform of life." How subtle is evil! How many have been manipulated to engage in this attack on the purity of this message of "Our Lady of America®" by promoting this contaminated version! Of course the evil one does not want us to hear and heed Our Lady's voice, for he would lose his power over us. The evil one does not want us to confront our own errors. Sister Mildred spoke so often how Satan hated her and attacked her because of the importance of this devotion. Since our theologians themselves state that Our Lady comes to earth when there is great heresy or false teaching to be corrected, we see how absolutely essential this outline of a "reform of life" as given by Jesus and Mary is to the devotion, for Our Lady herself says it is "reform of life" that she asks for and that proves our love for her and makes an

enthronement a sign of true devotion. Without the reform, our devotion is not sincere but becomes a mockery of our words and actions.

Satan hates the Trinity, the true God, and has manipulated some to delete the magnificent *Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity* approved by Bishop George Rehring of Toledo, OH, diocese of authority, as part of **the prayer leaflet on the devotion**, a prayer given the imprimatur by Paul F. Leibold, V.G. in 1963, a prayer essential to the heart of the message on the Indwelling Holy Trinity. Bishop Rehring's approval makes this 4 page leaflet the truly official prayer leaflet for the devotion, the one only available from the Our Lady of America Center in Fostoria, Ohio where the visionary had lived until her death in 2000. **Why delete this prayer that speaks to the heart of the message, the Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity?** There is no good reason, for the prayer calls us to basic Christian living, to live out our Baptism into Christ's death so we may conquer sin and death and rise with Him? The prayer asks us to surrender our wills to God's, basic Church teaching. **Our Lady says the will of God must be dearer to us than all else.**

And if this were not enough error to address, there is still more.

Beloved daughter, there is so much untruth in the truth that is sought. Truth comes from Him who has been sent by my Son, the Spirit who is Truth. Pray continuously to be guided by this Spirit who is the true enlightenment.

Many are those who seek truth from spirits who are false and lead only to a greater ignorance and a worse destruction. The Divine Spirit abides in my Son Jesus and is sent by Him. All other spirits are only true in Him, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Beware of any spirit which does not abide in the Holy Spirit and does not receive power and light from Him. Meditate on this often, dear child, so that only the Spirit of Truth may abide in you and be the light of your journey to the Father.

Dear one, the misuse of the tongue, the power of speech is a terrible evil. From it comes hatreds of every kind—blasphemies, murders of the born and the unborn, the old and the unwanted. It is the tongue, speaking words of destruction, corruption and deceit, that has caused and is causing to a most frightening degree the chaos that is happening among all men and nations. (Diary,"Our Lady of America®," pgs. 43-44.)

Can we grasp what Our Lady is telling us here? **The misuse of the tongue, the power of speech, is a terrible evil. From it comes hatreds of every kind—blasphemies, murders of the born and the unborn, the old and the unwanted.** Let us think on this. How does the misuse of the tongue bring about such evils? What exactly does Our Lady mean when she says it is the tongue, through speaking words of destruction, corruption and deceit, that is causing to a frightening degree the chaos that is happening among all men and nations? And Truth? There can be no 99 44/100 % pure. God's Truth cannot have the slightest falsehood; it must be 100% pure or it is false. How we compromise this truth!

The Word of God become Man spoke words of healing, forgiveness, kindness and compassion. He spoke harshly only of and to those who by their pride and deceit were leading His people astray.

With His tongue, He glorified the Father and gave hope and confidence to His people. Use your tongue, O my dear children, to praise the Trinity within you, to tell of the glory of Him who lives in you, and through you desires to speak words of wisdom, kindness and compassion. Do not prevent the Holy One from doing good through you by using your tongue as an instrument of evil. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®,"pg. 44.)

There is so much here to ponder in Our Lady's call for a "reform of life" that would put us in a direct stance against the insidious evils of our day. Can we not hear Rachel weeping for her children as we listen to Our Lady's pleadings and her weeping over us, her spiritual children, who still are not listening to her?

O my children, you still aren't listening. I see the destruction coming but you do not believe me. You can stem this tide of suffering if you at last do as I've been asking of you for so long. Renew your hearts, your spirits, by seeking and following the light of the Holy Spirit within yourselves and in the teachings of Holy Church.

The Divine Spirit is there but you are continuing in your blindness and so blotting out the Divine Light and closing your ears to eternal truth, I beg of you to heed my voice or there will be no more time for you to turn back the Divine Wrath. I weep for you because I love you and wish, my dear children, to spare you this terrible suffering. Listen and pity your Mother. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®,"pgs. 44-45)

I weep for you because I love you.

Beloved daughter, how many let human wisdom guide them through life. This is a serious mistake that will cause much suffering. Unless human wisdom is guided and saturated by Divine Wisdom, it is a helpless yet dangerous tool in human hands. Helpless because it lacks understanding and true knowledge, dangerous because it leads to wrong paths of darkness where the only light is false like a mirage in the desert. (Diary, "Our Lady of America®," pg. 39.)

**Weep, then, dear child[ren], weep with your Mother over the sins of men. Intercede with me before the throne of mercy, for sin is overwhelming the world and punishment is not far away.
(Diary, "Our Lady of America®," pg. 34.)**

Will we allow our dear Mother to weep in vain, or will we chasten our hearts and remove the sword from her own? Will we become part of her “army of chaste soldiers” willing to fight to the death to preserve the purity of our lives?

**Jesus’ birth was met with the martyrdom of the Holy Innocents, while “Our Lady of America’s®” apparition was begun on the feast of our North American martyrs. Is Our Lady calling us to a *new martyrdom* within the Church? Is our Faith pure enough, real enough, to embrace martyrdom?
How will we answer our dear Mother?**

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