

## ***Blessing of Children on Holy Innocents Day***

\*The feast of the Holy Innocents is a good time to teach the children about their special patrons. There is also a traditional children's blessing for the feast of the Holy Innocents that can be performed by the parents in the absence of a priest's blessing at church.

The father leads everyone present in the ***Our Father***. Then he says the vesicles, "O Lord, hear my prayer," and all respond, "And let my cry come unto You. The father proceeds with this prayer taken from the blessing for children:

**Let us pray.** O Lord Jesus Christ, once You embraced and placed Your hands upon the little children who came to You, and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and their angels always see the face of my Father!" Look now with fatherly eyes on the innocence of these children and their parents' devotion, and bless them this day through our ministry. (*The father signs the forehead of each child with the sign of the cross.*) In Your grace and goodness let them advance continually, longing for You, loving You, fearing You, keeping Your commandments. Then they will surely come to their destined home, through You, Savior of the world. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

**All answer: Amen.**

Then the father says to the children: "May God bless you. And may He keep your hearts and minds - the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost."

**All answer: Amen.**

***The father then sprinkles the children with holy water.***

(The Church's official blessing of children is included in the Roman Ritual.)

Prayer source: *Twelve Days of Christmas, The* by Elsa Chaney, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1955. \*(excerpted from: [www.catholicculture.org](http://www.catholicculture.org))



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## ***Feast of the Holy Innocents*** ***December 28***



*The Holy Innocents by Giotto di Bondone*

***\*O God,  
Whose praise the martyred innocents  
did this day proclaim,  
not by speaking, but by dying:  
Destroy in us all the malice of sinfulness,  
that our lives may also proclaim thy faith,  
which our tongues profess.  
Through our Lord.  
Amen.***

\*(excerpted from: [www.marypages.com](http://www.marypages.com))

## ***Feast of The Holy Innocents, Martyrs***

**\*During** the octave of Christmas, the church celebrates the memory of the small children of the neighborhood of Bethlehem who were put to death by Herod. These innocent lives bear witness to Christ who was persecuted from the time of His birth by a world which would not receive Him. It is Christ Himself who is at stake in this mass-murder of the children; already the choice, for or against Him, is put clearly before men. But the persecutors are powerless, for Christ came to perform a work of salvation that nothing could prevent; when He fell into the hands of His enemies at the time chosen by God, it was to redeem the world by His own blood. Our Christmas joy is tempered on this day by a feeling of sadness. But the church looks principally to the glory of the children, of these innocent victims, whom she shows us in heaven following the Lamb wherever he goes. \*(excerpted from www.catholicculture.org)

**\*\*The** Holy Innocents (AKA Childermas) are called such for three reasons. First, by cause and reason of life; Second, by reason of pain; and Third, by reason of innocence. They are innocent by reason of life because they had an innocent life. They grieved nobody, neither God, by in obedience, nor their neighbors by untruth, nor by conceiving of any sin. It is said in the psalter that the innocents and righteous have joined them to me by their life and righteousness in the faith. They are innocent by reason of pain, for they suffered death innocently and wrongly, wherein David said: "They have shed the blood of innocents by reason of innocency." In this martyrdom, they were baptized and made clean of the original sin, of which innocence is said in the psalter: "Keep thou innocency of baptism and see equity of good works." This is the third reason for their innocents. \*\* (excerpted from: catholic-forum.com)

**\*\*\*The** Massacre of the Holy Innocents is recorded in the second Chapter of the Book of Matthew. It recalls an event when Pharaoh instructed the midwives during the time Israel was enslaved in Egypt: "And the king of Egypt spoke to the midwives of the Hebrews of whom was called Sephora, the other Phua, commanding them: when you shall do the office of midwives to the Hebrew women, and the time of delivery is come: if it be a man child, kill it: if a woman, keep it alive...Pharaoh therefore charged all his people, saying: Whatsoever shall be born of the male sex, ye shall cast into the river: whatsoever of the female, ye shall save alive. (Exodus 1:15-16, 22)

Moses was saved from this murder when his mother placed him in a little ark and floated him in the river. Moses' sister watched from afar as the Pharaoh's daughter found the child (Exodus 2). The massacre from which Moses was spared is a type, a foreshadowing, of the massacre of the holy innocents that took place soon after Christ was born. \*\*\*(excerpted from: www.fisheaters.com)

**\*\*\*In** the Gospel of St. Matthew (2: 16-18) we read: "Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and sending soldiers, killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice in Rama was heard,

lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

\*\*\*\*(excerpted from: www.newadvent.oorg)

**\*\*\*\*In** order to understand which Herod it was that so cruelly put so many children to death, we must first understand that there were three Herods. All three were cruel tyrants, and in their time of great fame, were known for their great malice.

The first was Herod Ascalonita, he reigned in Jerusalem when our Lord was born. The second was Herod Antipas, to whom Pilate sent Jesus Christ in the time of His passion, and who also beheaded Saint John The Baptist. The third was Herod Agrippa, who beheaded Saint James. (The first Apostle to be martyred) and sent Saint Peter to prison.

It was Herod Ascalonita, the first Herod, who killed the innocents. He had served the Roman emperor Julian with such great distinction, that Julian gave him the realm of Jerusalem to rule. This resulted in the Jewish kings losing their lineage, and fulfilled the prophecy of the birth of our Lord.

When the three Magi's came to Jerusalem seeking the king of the Jews that had just been born, Herod had a great dread, fearing that anyone born of the true lineage of the kings of the Jews, and being a true heir, would chase him out of his realm. He demanded to know from the three Magi's how they had knowledge of this new king. They answered by a star being in the air, which was not naturally fixed in the heaven as were the others. He then asked the magi's to return after they had worshipped the new king, so that he might also go and worship the child.

After the three magi's departed without bringing him any news, he decided to slay all the newborn children in Bethlehem and its surroundings. He could not immediately carry out his plan, because the emperor sent him a citation to come to Rome to answer accusations by his sons. He spent more than a half a year traveling to and from Rome to answer the accusations, meanwhile, Jesus was on his way to Egypt.

When Herod returned from Rome and feeling secure that the emperor had again confirmed his realm, he again decided to kill the children. Since more than a year had passed since the three magi's went to see him, he decided to slay all the children that were of the age of two years. \*\*\*\*\*(excerpted from: catholic-forum.com)

### ***REFLECTION***

**\*\*\*\*\*That** the Holy Innocents may be invoked to be preserved from illusion is the Church's belief. Herod's illusion of threat from the newborn King cost their lives...How few, perhaps, of these innocent little ones, if they had lived, would have escaped the dangers of the world. From what snares, what sins, what miseries were they preserved. Surely they rejoice now in their fate. We often lament, as misfortunes, many accidents which in the designs of Heaven are the greatest mercies.

\*\*\*\*\*\*(excerpted from: www.magnificat.ca)