

28. 12. 67

28. 12. 70 (250) adolph

27. 12. 71 " "

27. 12. 73 " "

Laudario
di Cortone

(7) Adorata 7 Mothers.

Matt. 2¹³⁻¹⁶ (Prayer Book, p 42)

The old Italian Christmas song I began with is about the adoration of the Christ-child by the mother. But St Matthew's gospel reminds us that the birth of Christ meant great sorrow & anguish for the mother of those children killed by Herod's pride & fear. As today is the feast-day of those Holy Innocents, let us remember in our prayers the people ~~for~~ whom this Christmas has been a time of sadness, sorrow or suffering.

PRAYERS

~~The Coventry Carol, about 600 years old, recalls the~~

Most Christmas songs & cards are gay, bright, happy, joyful tunes; but there's one that recalls the ~~cruelty~~ cruelty of Herod and the sorrow it caused at this time of joy for the world. It's the nearly 600-year-old Coventry Carol, from England. Let's listen to some of its plaintive melody & words, with a prayer in our hearts for all who are sad at this time of joy.

From the indications that St Matthew gives us, it seems that the slaughter of the innocents happened quite a little time after the birth of Christ. But we celebrate their birth into eternal life just three days after Christmas, the first people to die for Christ, or because of him. They didn't know why they died — even more so did the anguished mother & father of those small boys not know why they had to die, and so cruelly. They wouldn't have known that ~~was~~ Mary's child was so important as to cause Herod's savage action — though Herod's cruelty & unpredictability in doing anything to keep his power secure were common knowledge. 'Why should this happen to us?' — these parents were not the first, or the last to ask that anguished question. And we don't know if they ever found a satisfying answer. All they knew was that their children had been senselessly snatched away from them and murdered — they didn't know why. Did they find out later that Joseph & Mary & their child had disappeared before the slaughter? — & if they had, would it have meant anything to them? With our hindsight now, could we have really comforted them?

Christ was born to share our human lot, to the full. Heavy to be a refugee in a strange country is all too common in our wonderful, progressive 20th century. But God himself, when He came among us, experienced this hardship. Did Joseph & Mary

understand why? All they knew was the difficulty & uncertainty of their journey to Egypt & their stay there, and their anxiety for their child, an anxiety heightened by the fact that they knew this was a very special child. They had to look after Him — they got no easy way out. Only, the time for his dying had not yet come, and so they were able to escape the plans of Herod. But they didn't complain, although they didn't understand the ways of God, even with His own son.

What happened to Christ, & to Mary & Joseph, and to the families of those children does slow up one thing about the child that was born at Christmas. He came to bring light where there was darkness, salvation where there was sin — and our world preferred, as it still does, darkness & sin. So Christ became a sign of contradiction. He told His apostles at the end that they should expect the world to hate them, as it had hated him. For Christ himself, that hatred, personified by Herod, began in his cradle. And, like all hatred, all sin, its effects were felt by many innocent people.

So while we celebrate the joy & happiness of Christmas, God's just reminds us of the other side of the coin — that Xt. was, and still is unacceptable to many people, & that God's plans are working themselves out, unrecognized by us often, and often too

through suffering & sorrow — through all the things that make us ask why? We may not be able to say why, but since Christmas we know that God loves