

“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” (2:13). Unable to pinpoint the Christ child, Herod ordered the slaughter of every child two years and under in the vicinity of Bethlehem.

King Herod ruled by the sword. He had no fear of God. He boldly took life and committed many more notorious atrocities all in the name of maintaining his fleeting power.<sup>i</sup> The Holy Innocents, although small in number, are of great significance to God. They were the first Martyrs of the Christian faith. Just as the hairs on our head are numbered, the atrocities of Herod large and small did not go unnoticed or unpunished by God.

The atrocities of Herod and the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt call to mind the enslavement of the Hebrew people. Pharaoh ordered that every male child born of the Hebrew women was to be killed (cf. Ex 1:7-22). “Today not a few of the powerful of the earth act in the same way. They too are haunted by the current demographic growth, and fear that the most prolific and poorest peoples represent a threat for the well-being and peace of their own countries. Consequently, rather than wishing to face and solve these serious problems with respect for the dignity of individuals and families and for every person’s inviolable right to life, they prefer to promote and impose by whatever means a massive program of birth control. Even the economic help which they would be ready to give is unjustly made conditional on the acceptance of an anti-birth policy.”<sup>ii</sup>

Human life is created in the image and likeness of God. It is sacred. Every life deserves protection, the innocent child in the womb and the convicted criminal on death row. Life originates from God and therefore we have an inherent responsibility to protect that which God holds dear to himself. We should all work to uphold the standard of the Declaration of Independence. The right to life is inalienable. Given by God, no man has the right to take it away.

Those who are most vulnerable deserve the greatest protection. In our nation’s past, women were not given the right to vote until enough protested and called for the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment offering women the right to vote. Women used their voices and led the way. The unborn of our era are like the Holy Innocents of biblical times. They are unable to speak or defend themselves. Thus, it is incumbent upon those who have voices to speak for the unborn. In fact, we need to speak out against every type of injustice. Let us recall the eloquent prayer of Saint John Paul II from the Gospel of Life<sup>iii</sup>.

O Mary, bright dawn of the new world, Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life. Look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born, of the poor whose lives are made difficult, of men and women who are victims of brutal violence, of the elderly and the sick killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son may proclaim the Gospel of life with honesty and love to the people of our time. Obtain for them the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new, the joy of celebrating it with gratitude throughout their lives and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build, together with all people of good will, the civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.

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<sup>i</sup> catholicnewsagency.com/saint/holy-innocents-667

<sup>ii</sup> Evangelium Vitae #16.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid #105.