

Pro-life – a talk for Holy Innocents' Day

Christmas is not just
about tinsel and glitter and feeling all warm inside.

It has some jagged edges, major jagged edges,
which we mark today.

A paranoid king
embarking on a spree of binge infanticide
to do away with any possible opposition.

The Christchild's light shines in the darkness of Palestine,
and the darkness not only understands him not,
but tries to snuff him out before he even begins.

Days such as today give us pause for thought,
that God's greatest
and positively nuclear work of salvation
only comes at a tremendous price,

for Him and for all those caught up in the fall-out.

We mark today all the babies murdered
for the best of intentions and for the worst of intentions,
all lost children,
all parents, particularly mothers,
who feel out of time
in that they perversely survive their offspring
and weep and weep and weep.

Yet the Gospel is not about the children who died,
terrible though that was,
but is about the Child who survived
and gave all children
access to God their loving father.

Baptism, with its prime symbol of water,
catches this tension between darkness and light,

death and life.

Water can be terrifying stuff:

it can drown you,

corrode you:

we shudder when we think of other planets

shrouded in methane or sulphur dioxide;

we should shudder when we think of our own planet

shrouded in H₂O,

alkali and acid all rolled into one.

Yet without this terrible thing called water,

you die.

It quenches your thirst and washes you clean

and warms and soothes you.

The water of baptism speaks to us

of both the strange terribleness

and loveliness

of God.

And this isn't any old baptism,

but the baptism of a child called Noah.

The story of Noah's ark is a children's favourite.

But actually it is a terrifying story,

catching a disaster a million times worse

than the Boxing Day Tsunami

which hit the world four years back:

all life wiped out by a cosmic flood.

But just as the Gospel is not about the children who died,

but the child who survived,

the story of Noah's ark

is about the teeming life which survived

and made the world throb with the pulse of creation.

We gather today to express our deep empathy

for all the sadnesses,

all those whose lives are cruelly cut short
by natural disaster or murderous design.

But we gather chiefly to shout from the roof tops
that we are pro-life,
we commit ourselves to live the life
God has given us in Christ to the full.

Babies like Noah remind us,
quite forcibly sometimes,
that we are alive.

Whereas so often we mooch about,
as if we were dead.

Perhaps a good question to pose
at the end of our every day is,
what difference would it have made to the world today
if I had been a corpse rather than
a person brimming with God's life?

Noah did not die in the terrible flood,
and made a massive difference.

Jesus did not die in the massacre of the innocents,
and made a colossal difference,
kicking all other differences into touch,
breaking history in two, BC/AD.

Two thousand years on we stand today,
thanking God for this marvellous child, and saying,
'Christ, with you beside him,
this child Noah will make a difference.

Because he is going to walk through life
with us beside him.

And we are
making-a-difference-people:

we caught the habit from Christ

the ultimate make-a-difference person:

In Christ, Noah will catch the habit from us.