

SERMON - THE HOLY INNOCENTS - 28 DECEMBER 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Matthew 2:17-18 (KJV)

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, ¹⁸In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Each year at this time we are reminded of the cruelty of Herod, how he had all the male children two years old and under who were living in Bethlehem murdered. We are all appalled at how anything like this could happen. How could anyone be so cruel.

Each year in the United States alone some eight-hundred thousand to a million two-hundred thousand unborn children are aborted.

Each year over two-hundred and fifty thousand Christians are martyred for their faith.

Since the beginning of the Iraqi war the Christian population of that country has dropped from some one million to six-hundred thousand due to murder and emigration and the numbers continue to drop each day.

In Orissa state in India some seventy thousand Christians are displaced from the recent Hindu persecutions.

In Nigeria, some 500 Christians have been killed including six pastors, 40 church buildings have been burned and some twenty-thousand people displaced by muslim violence since November 28th of this year.

I could go on and on, giving you more and more figures and facts.

I could tell you about the young boy in Indonesia who was forced to watch his Sunday school teacher disemboweled then beheaded before he himself was killed the same way

in front of all the rest of the Sunday school boys.

I could tell you about the Australian missionary in India who with his young son were pulled out of their car by a mob of Hindus and burned to death.

We all have heard about the horrors in the Darfur where many of those who have died are Christians.

Across the world millions of innocent children and others die each year, some because they are Christians some because they are victims of a society that has no other religion than the religion of self.

In either case it is because God has been taken out of society, Christ no longer matters or is feared. Hatred has replaced the love of God.

There have been more than fifty million Christians killed for their faith since 1915.

These are just statistics. The real world is that these are real human beings not just numbers. These were live human beings. They all were someone's' sons or daughters, mothers or fathers, brothers or sisters. They were alive and now they are dead. Some never had a chance to really live. Some had years of life and love.

And someone weeps for them.

That someone may be a mother, a father, some other relative, but that someone is always Christ.

We Christians have a moral responsibility. We Christians have a moral responsibility to speak out on issues that affect us and that affect the morality of our nation and wherever the Church is under attack.

We cannot think that we can just sit back and ignore the facts. Each person who is martyred, each unborn child that is aborted affects each one of us.

John Donne, the 17th Century Anglican Priest, wrote *No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind...Perchance he for whom this bell tolls, may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me...may have caused it to toll for me...and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*

Amen.