



The Infancy Narratives of St. Matthew's Gospel

Fr. Nicholas King SJ – Week Three



This liturgical year has been designated as a 'Year of the Word' by the Bishops of England and Wales. Between the First Sunday of Advent 2019 and the Feast of Christ the King 2020, there will be many opportunities to deepen our appreciation of Scripture as the Word of God. The Year has the title: 'The God who speaks' which is taken from a document called *Verbum Domini* (the Word of the Lord) which was published 10 years ago (part of the reason for the special Year). It reminds us that God has spoken to human beings for thousands of years. Humans have not always been attentive to what God is saying – or understood it when they have heard it – but God speaks and this Year gives us a chance to learn better how to listen.

As we enter this 'Year of the Word' we begin with the infancy narratives of Matthew's Gospel. Three short reflections offer us a chance to engage with the complexities of a story which we know so well. Fr. Nicholas King SJ captures the essence of St. Matthew's telling of the story and offers us some intriguing insights.

You might like to begin your reflection with a short time of prayer as offered here and then, having listened to Fr. Nicholas, take time to consider what he has told us. Feel free to use or ignore the points for discussion.

Gathering

All-loving God - we gather in your presence.
Almighty Father - we long for more of you.
Jesus - we place you at the centre
Holy Spirit - come and fill our time together.
Help us to be fully present here,
to your word, to one another,
and to the world you love.

The Escape to Egypt and the Massacre of the Infants

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

Reflection – Fr. Nicholas King SJ

Watch the video here -

Following the video, take some time to ponder on what you have heard. These questions may help your personal or collective reflections

Points to ponder

1. What struck you about what Fr. Nicholas had to say?
2. Joseph always seems to respond positively and immediately – what does this say about his relationship with God?
3. When you hear the account of the killing of the innocent children what does it make you feel? What kind of person do you think Herod was?
4. The killing of innocent children continues today in Syria and Yemen to name but two places. In this 'Year of Communion' how can we as parishes

- ensure that we do not forget our brothers and sisters in distant countries?
How can we protect the children in our own communities?
5. What are your dreams – do you ever have sense of God speaking to you in the context of a dream?

Conclude your time of reflection with the following:

Reader
All The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary:
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
“Be it done unto me according to your word”.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All And the Word was made flesh:
And dwelt amongst us.
Hail Mary...

Reader
All Let us pray,
Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord,
Your Grace into our hearts;
that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son,
was made known by the message of an angel,
may be brought by his passion and cross
to the glory of His Resurrection.
Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION

