

Week 27 - Christmas Sacred or Christ Massacred - 30th December 2017



Leon Cogniet 1794-1880

Are you someone who likes to play with words? I do. When we get a word that can be used in more than one way I think it is really clever, and the title for our reflections is such a word. The letters **CHRISTMASSACRED** can make either

CHRISTMAS SACRED

or

CHRIST MASSACRED

Exactly the same letters in exactly the same order but it is where you put the space that makes the meaning.

The birth of Jesus was all about the sacred becoming flesh, God being revealed in the world. But when you are faced with such love, evil cannot cope and does its best to destroy it, and so after the joy of Christmas, the celebrations, the hope that comes with the season, we have the Feast of the Holy Innocents, also called Childermas, or Innocents' Day, a festival celebrated in the Christian churches in the West on December 28th and in the Eastern churches on December 29th, commemorating the massacre of the children by King Herod in his attempt to kill the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:16–18).

In all the years that I have been a Local Preacher I estimate I have only preached on this theme perhaps three times, because either I have not been planned or there have been other subjects in the lectionary or we have got rid of Christmas so quickly in order to do our Covenant Services, and this very uncomfortable story is pushed to one side. I remember preaching on the Massacre of the Innocents the year of the Dunblane tragedy, and that really brought home the devastation that this event recorded.

This awful account records the first attempt by the authorities to get rid of Jesus, a plan which they thought had succeeded some 33 years or so later on the cross. I said in an earlier reflection that you cannot have Christmas without Easter and Easter without Christmas. The shadow of the cross lies over the manger.

Jesus came as the WORD, the one who spoke creation into being. May we use the words we have to tell Good News of the God of love who turns EVIL into LIVE, HATE into LOVE and FEAR into HOPE.

Holy and gracious God who weeps at the death of each innocent child, help us to make this world a place where children are given love, hope, guidance and peace, so that they may become what you created them all to be. Amen.

Weekly Prayers for December by Denise Creed.