

How wise the Church is to follow Christmas Day with the Feast of St. Stephen and the Feast of St. John with the feast of the Holy Innocents. Light and shadow racing across the landscape. No rest here for the good or the wicked. My temptation, when we come to today's feast, is to recast it in a more benign manner; to perhaps re-name it as 'the Feast of the Wholly Innocents' – not martyrs for Christ but entirely ignorant of their fate, of their role in the Christian story; a tragic instance of collateral damage. But whatever one's own views about how we use this episode for our own propaganda, it serves to highlight the razor edge we all lie on between good and evil and we can see the continuation of the reading from the first letter of John as a bridge between these last two instances of light and darkness; yesterday, celebrating the Word, in all its mystical power, the Good News of God's presence with us always, and today, highlighting why this Good News is needed, because of sin, which is within us all. Herod, then, as an instance of what we are all capable of in this desperate world where the attraction of deceit and the pursuit of power for personal ends is becoming ever more obvious. We need a cautionary tale of our own part in humanity's decline – there, but for the grace of God, go all of us.

*I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning;
but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the
Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that
takes our sin away and not only ours, but the whole world's.*

And the whole world needs to hear this.

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