

Matthew 2:13-23 (Gospel, Sunday After)

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Galatians 1:11-19 (Epistle, Sunday After)

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

DANBURY FOOD PANTRY - JANUARY

Suggested donation of Tuna (and other non-perishable goods) will be collected through January 13.

January donations will be delivered to the food pantry Thursday January 17.

PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. So as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.). Put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. **PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.**
- Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.

Emotions and Worship

If there is any criticism we get from non-Orthodox Christians (and on occasion from some Orthodox Christians as well), it is that we seem so stoic in worship; there is no spontaneity in our liturgy. We read from a book when we celebrate a service and we read from the same book, week after week. We sing from prepared texts according to a tonal system that all Orthodox churches throughout the world observe. Our services, some claim, can be so boring.

How does one respond to this in the age of the Sesame Street Culture that shapes the view of so many in today's world? I can first respond by saying emotions are deceptive. What one "feels" does not always define reality and truth. Healthy habits in life are never learned or defined by emotions. Habits are behaviors. If we are ruled by our emotions, we will never stand on solid ground when it comes to anything in life.

When it comes to worship, we begin with something earthly, which we aim to transform into something heavenly, something "not of this world." We seek to encounter God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The idea that this is a "fun thing to do" just doesn't make sense. Look at the many people in the Old and New Testaments who encountered God; it wasn't always, nor necessarily, fun. They fell flat on their faces in awe, in fear and trembling, transcending worldly notions of "fun", and yet found something marvelous to ponder: "Lord it is good for us to here."

So we don't sing hymns designed primarily to stimulate our emotions. Our clergy read the petitions of the liturgy in a monotone chant. They do not get theatrical and emotional as they read the petitions. If they did, we would be comparing priest-to-priest and choir-to-choir. We would begin to define our experience of Church by which priest or choir made us feel best about ourselves when the service was over. Church would quickly become a personality cult and we would never encounter anything beyond an emotionally driven experience.

The more I think about this, the more I see the need to write more. So I will continue with this topic next week. I need to speak more on how we might view our emotions in worship. We are not robots.

As we complete the remainder the Advent Fast, let us look ahead in joyful anticipation to the celebration of the Lord's Nativity. Let us go to the manger and cave in Bethlehem to encounter the newborn child — Who is God become man, and Who comes to makes us whole.

The Lord's blessing be upon you,
The unworthy +Paul

DECEMBER

	Cleaners	Readers	Social
2	Laura	Wayne	NO SOCIAL
9	Joe & Sonya	Wayne	Stephanie K
16	Sandy	Tim	Rachel A
23	Wayne	Natalie	Jean H
30	Matthew A.	Ron	Fr. Andrew

Note: The reader for Jan.6 will be Tim. There is no one signed up for social on that day. The new sheet is in basement of the church

January

	Cleaners	Readers	Social
6		Tim	Open
13			
20			
27			

THE PROBLEM OF INNOCENT SUFFERING

The problem of human suffering is a universal one. Most painful is innocent suffering such as the killing of the children of Herod. How historically accurate this report is or how many children were actually killed does not really matter as much as the fact that the pages of history are filled with the killings of innocent persons, families and entire communities. Even in our own century there have been wholesale genocides as in the case of the Jews in Germany and the Armenians in their native land. Millions of innocent people, including children, were killed as a result of World War II which was initiated by a nation that was thought to be the most civilized in the world. What kind of commentary on the dark side of human nature is this record of history? What of the unimaginable toll of mental and emotional suffering? Why man's inhumanity to man?

St John Chrysostem in Homily 9 of his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew gives the following answers to the problem of innocent suffering in the case of the killing of the children by Herod.

*God knew about this tragedy before it happened as Jeremiah's prophecy shows.

*God knew and permitted, but did not cause, this tragedy.

*Herod, blinded by cruelty, was responsible for the murder of the children.

*The children were without sin, completely innocent, and they received their reward as martyrs in heaven.

*There are also other reasons which we do not know and ought to leave to God.

