

In these three feast days after Christmas, we have set before us three different examples of holiness.

1. St. Stephen – Martyr in will and deed
2. St. John – Martyr in will, but not in deed
3. Holy Innocents – Martyrs in deed, but not in will (too young, had no agency in the martyrdom they suffered, yet they did die for the sake of Christ)

It is an undeniable fact that really terrible things may and will happen to all of us. We often interpret this to be a capriciousness to God.

This poses a familiar conundrum that many rely upon in order to justify their disbelief in God. It seems that God, if he doesn't cause evil, at least permits evil.

To this, Christians (and/or skeptics) have proposed various arguments as to why evil things happen, we call such an arguments a Theodicy – a justification of God.

Not going to attempt to go into details of such arguments, but only mention to point out that the fact of evil or disasters should not surprise us.

We see in the murder of the children in Bethlehem such an event, and we wonder how God could allow this, and how such a travesty honors God. It is disturbing.

1. understand that God takes no pleasure in the suffering endured by the innocent.
2. God gives humans agency to do good or to do evil. We are not robots.
 1. Our evil is real and we are guilty for the sin we commit
 2. Our good deeds done unto the Lord likewise real and we shall be rewarded for our work done unto the Lord in Christ Jesus.
3. B/c humans have potential to do evil, innocents will often suffer as victims.
4. Let us understand that those who suffer such atrocities innocently will be welcomed into the arms of Jesus.

5. We read for the epistle: These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.
6. God honors our agency, the Image of God which He gave to us. He also will do justice to those who suffer, even unintentionally, for His sake. Such have a special place before the throne of God.
7. Have confidence in God. He will make things right. He sees the suffering of the innocent, and it breaks His heart. He will not let such suffering be ignored.
8. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. AMEN.

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Com. #294, For the Bread Which Thou Hast Broken

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