

Holy Innocents The Feast Day of the Holy Innocents is commemorated on December 28th. Many people are not familiar with this day and the importance that it holds. This feast day is about the massacre of the children by King Herod in his attempt to kill the infant Jesus. These children are regarded as the first martyrs. Herod, the King of Judea, was widely unpopular with his people because of his extreme brutality. He was a very insecure man and fearful of any threat to his throne. This tyrant killed his wife, brother, sons and his sister's two husbands just to name a few. During his reign, the Magi, whose adoration is remembered on January 6th (Epiphany), inquired where the newborn King of the Jews was located. Herod heard of their asking and was informed that it was prophesied that this Child would be born in Judea. He was threatened by this prophecy and instructed the Magi to report back as to the location of the Child so he too could "worship" Him. The Magi found Jesus but did not return to Herod as it was instructed to them by a dream. The Holy Family, warned through St. Joseph who was also visited by an angel in a dream, fled into Egypt. Herod became enraged at the Magi's actions and ordered the slaughter of all of the baby boys in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger. The Gospel of Matthew tells this story: "Herod was "greatly troubled" when astrologers from the east came asking the whereabouts of "the newborn king of the Jews," whose star they had seen. They were told that the Jewish Scriptures named Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah would be born. Herod cunningly told them to report back to him so that he could also "do him homage." They found Jesus, offered him their gifts, and warned by an angel, avoided Herod on their way home. Jesus escaped to Egypt. Herod became furious and "ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under." The horror of the massacre and the devastation of the mothers and fathers led Matthew to quote Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more." One of the customs to commemorate this day is that the youngest child "rules the day." It is this child that decides the days meals, drinks, entertainment, etc. Parents, brace yourself, this could be a very interesting day!! -Sherrie Clutts DRE