

Praying the Stations of the Cross
with the
Holy Innocents
(The Stations of the Lamb)

Dedicated to
Our Lady of Knock Eucharistic and Marian Shrine

A Journey and Meditation on the Mystery of Salvation
as seen through the lens of
The Deaths of the Holy Innocents
in light of the
Infancy and Passion of Christ

To be prayed on any day or feast
and especially on the Feast of the Holy Innocents



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Introduction

For the first time, Mary's Via Dolorosa takes the form of a physical journey when the angel warns Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. The wrath of death has come upon Jesus in Herod's fear and rage. In Joseph's attentiveness to God's promptings, and in Mary's obedience to God's Will, they begin the first 'journey of a cross,' a journey that Jesus will take as a newborn infant.

This journey will be marked by the deaths of many innocents: infants and children up to 2 years old. These are the 'brothers' who were born when Jesus was born, and they, like His own disciples of later years, are called to give their lives as sacrifice for their intimacy with him. Mary and Joseph would have been living in the area of Bethlehem for at least 6 weeks; this was the amount of time necessary before their visit to the Temple for Mary's Purification and Jesus' Presentation. Mary and Joseph would probably have met and come to know a number of the parents of the newborn children of similar age as their own, as is customary among parents of newborn children. Thus, as they journey to Egypt, they will carry in their minds and hearts the deaths of the children of friends, and possibly of relatives as well since this was Joseph's family's home.

Joseph, the descendant of kings, and the father of the King of Kings, will not live to see his Son crucified and die, as it is appropriate that the father of the King has passed on before the Son takes His throne; Mary will walk that journey without her husband. Yet, in this journey to exile, Joseph will carry – under his responsibility as husband and father, as descendant of kings, and as father of the King – the profound sorrow of the deaths of the Innocents and the accompanying heart-rending joy that, in some mysterious way, the salvation his Son is bringing into the world has a foundation on their deaths.

Jesus will learn of these deaths through Joseph and Mary who will have known those who died and their families. It is their intimate participation with these Innocents and their parents that they will carry as part of their union with their Son as they form Him toward His mission, knowing that their own Son will also die as the Most Holy Innocent for the salvation of all.

It is somehow in God's mystery of salvation that, in accord with the deaths of the Innocents for His life while He journeys into exile, Jesus will offer His Innocence for the deliverance of all those who are in Exile that they may return Home.

For Each Station:

*The **Opening** for each Station.*

*The **Unity Prayer** (as an alternative, this may be prayed only once, at the beginning, as an introduction to the Stations).*

*The suggested **Meditation** with a brief time of reflection.*

***3 Precious Blood Prayers** – in honour of the Holy Family.*

Opening for each Station:

Glory to God in the Highest!
We adore you, O Christ, and we praise, bless, and thank You,
because by Your Holy Innocents
you have prefigured Your own death for our Salvation
and You have given testimony in their blood
to our Eternal life through Your Incarnation.

The Unity Prayer:

My Adorable Jesus
May our feet journey together
May our hands gather in Unity
May our hearts be in unison
May our souls be in harmony
May our thoughts be as one
May our ears listen to the silence together
May our glances profoundly penetrate each other
May our lips pray together to gain mercy from the Eternal Father

Precious Blood Prayer:

Most precious blood of Jesus Christ
Save us and the whole world.

I The Lamb Is Designated for the Sacrifice of Atonement

Prayer for Holy Innocents

We remember today, O God,
the slaughter of the holy innocents
of Bethlehem by King Herod.
Receive, we pray,
into the arms of your mercy
all innocent victims;
and by your great might
frustrate the designs of evil tyrants
and establish your rule of justice, love and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the union of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

mycatholicprayers.com/prayers/prayer-for-holy-innocents/

II The Lamb Takes On the Load of Atonement

These then, whom Herod's cruelty
tore as sucklings from their mothers' bosom,
are justly hailed as 'infant martyr flowers';
they were the Church's first blossoms,
matured by the frost of persecution
during the cold winter of unbelief.

St Augustine, homily on Feast of the Holy Innocents

III The Lamb Falls the First Time Under the Load

Behold those redeemed as the first fruits of the human race for God and the Lamb, and who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Communion Antiphon, Feast of the Holy Innocents

IV Mary Accompanies Her Lamb on their Shared Journey

The star of Bethlehem
shines forth in the dark night of sin.
Upon the radiance
that goes forth from the manger,
there falls the shadow of the cross.
In the dark of Good Friday, the light is extinguished
but it rises more brightly, as the sun of grace.
on the morning of the resurrection.
The road of the incarnate Son of God,
is through the cross and suffering
to the splendour of the resurrection.
To arrive with the Son of Man,
through suffering and death,
at this splendour of the resurrection
is the road for each one of us,
for all mankind.

Edith Stein, *The Mystery of Christmas: Incarnation and Humanity* (1931), trans. by
Sr Josephine Rucker SSJ (1950)

V Simon Supports the Lamb as It Carries Its Load

There is anguish for us, twenty centuries later, in thinking of the slain babies and their parents. For the babies the agony was soon over; in the next world they would come to know whom they had died to save and for all eternity would have that glory. For the parents, the pain would have lasted longer; but at death they too must have found that there was a special sense in which God was in their debt, as he had never been indebted to any. They and their children were the only ones who ever agonised in order to save God's life....

F. J. Sheed, *To Know Christ Jesus*, p. 45-46, as quoted in Fernandez, Vol 1, p. 234.

VI Veronica Receives the Image of the Guilty and Innocent Lamb

It is you the Lord gives me as a model,
Holy Innocents.
I want to be your faithful likeness here below,
Little Children.
Ah! deign to obtain for me the virtues of childhood.
Your candor,
Your perfect surrender, your lovely innocence
Charm my heart.
O Lord! You know the ardent desires
Of my exiled soul.
Beautiful Lily of the valley, I would like to harvest
Brilliant lilies.
These springtime Buds, I seek them and love them
For your pleasure.
Deign to pour on them the Dew of Baptism.
Come pluck them.....
Yes, I want to increase the candid army
Of Innocents.
My sufferings, my joys, I offer them in exchange
For Children's Souls.
Among these Innocents, I claim a place,
King of the Elect.
Like them, in Heaven I want to kiss your Sweet Face,
O my Jesus!...

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

PN 44, To my Little Brothers in Heaven (Stanzas 9–11)

First performed during recreation, 28 December 1896

VII The Lamb Falls the Second Time Under the Load

The innocents were slaughtered as infants for Christ; spotless they
follow the Lamb and sing for ever: Glory to You, Lord.

Entrance Antiphon, Feast of the Holy Innocents

VIII The Women Encounter the Lamb, the Hope of their Children

Today, too, we hear this heartrending cry of pain, which we neither desire nor are able to ignore or to silence. In our world — I write this with a heavy heart — we continue to hear the lamentation of so many mothers, of so many families, for the death of their children, their innocent children.

Pope Francis' 2016 letter marking the Feast of the Holy Innocents

IX The Lamb Falls the Third Time Under the Load

Today we pray for all the children who are not allowed to be born, who cry with hunger, who hold weapons in their hands instead of toys.

Pope Francis' 2016 letter marking the Feast of the Holy Innocents

X The Lamb Is Laid Bare for the Sacrifice

You are God: we praise you;
You are the Lord, we acclaim you;
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

From the *Te Deum*

XI The Lamb Is Prepared for the Sacrifice

There are the innocent children, the babes of Bethlehem and Judah, who were cruelly slaughtered by the hands of brutal hangmen. What does this mean? Where is now the rejoicing of the heavenly hosts, the silent bliss of the Holy Night? Where is the peace on earth? Peace on earth to those of goodwill. But not all are of goodwill. For the Son of the eternal Father descended from the glory of heaven, because the mystery of iniquity had shrouded the earth in the darkness of night.

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross *The Mystery of Christmas*

XII The Atonement of the Lamb Is Completed

O God, whom the Holy Innocents confessed and proclaimed on this day, not by speaking but by dying, grant, we pray, that the faith in You which we confess with our lips may also speak through our manner of life.

Collect of the Mass, Feast of the Holy Innocents

XIII The Mother Receives Her Lamb Who Will Feed Her Children

For as today's feast reveals, in the measure with which malice in all its fury was poured out upon the holy children did Heaven's blessing stream down upon them.

St Augustine, homily on Feast of the Holy Innocents

XIV Those In Sheol Receive the Lamb, Their Redemption

The precious death of any martyr
deserves high praise
because of his heroic confession;
the death of these children
is precious in the sight of God
because of the beatitude
they gained so quickly.
For already, at the beginning
of their lives, they pass on.
The end of the present life
is for them the beginning of glory.

St Augustine, homily on Feast of the Holy Innocents

Closing Poetic Meditation:

They scarcely waked before they slept,
They scarcely wept before they laughed;
They drank indeed death's bitter draught,
But all its bitterest dregs were kept
And drained by Mothers while they wept.

From Heaven the speechless Infants speak:
Weep not (they say), our Mothers dear,
For swords nor sorrows come not here.
Now we are strong who were so weak,
And all is ours we could not seek.

We bloom among the blooming flowers,
We sing among the singing birds;
Wisdom we have who wanted words:
Here morning knows not evening hours,
All's rainbow here without the showers.

And softer than our Mother's breast,
And closer than our Mother's arm,
Is here the Love that keeps us warm
And broods above our happy next.
Dear Mothers, come: for Heaven is best.

The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti, with a Memoir and Notes by William Michael Rossetti (1904), page 159

Journal / Meditations

*“The shadow of the cross falls
where the light of victory shines.”*

J.C.