

**Sunday 28 December 2025,
First Sunday of Christmas/Holy Innocents Day**

Collect:

God our Father,
in love you sent your Son
that the world may have life:
lead us to seek him among the outcast
and to find him in those in need,
for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

In the Church calendar Holy Innocents Day falls on 28 December, which this year is also the First Sunday of Christmas. The Gospel reading for Holy Innocents is Matthew 2:13-18, focussing specifically on Herod's violent revenge on the infants of Bethlehem for the Magi failing to divulge the whereabouts of the new king. The Gospel for Christmas I expands the focus, taking in the death of Herod and the return of Jesus to his homeland. The impact of Jesus' birth echoes throughout all of today's readings, beginning with Isaiah 63:7-9 which is part of a prayer of complaint and petition directly addressed to Yahweh underpinned by praise for God's historical saving actions on behalf of the people. It speaks of a saviour, a defending angel and of children in need of protection, linking us directly to the Gospel. The Psalm provides a different angle, a powerful burst of praise to God by all creation for the gift of all creation, a vision of hopefulness and goodness in joyful contrast with the human malevolence that darkens the Gospel.

In the passage from Hebrews the writer clarifies that God in Christ is concerned for the fate of creation, especially humanity, and reinforces the belief that in Christ God became fully human. At the same time, it recalls Abraham, who went down to and was drawn, by God, out of Egypt to fulfil his destiny. Jesus' full immersion into being human is seen clearly in the Gospel, where there is no doubt about his vulnerability. An angel has to prompt Joseph to gather up his family and flee Herod's wild wrath. In doing so the links are made explicit with both Abraham and the Hebrew nation obtaining temporary residence in Egypt before finding their true home in Palestine. We are confronted with the humanity of this family, but also their resilience in the face of the violent whims of a despot, a situation which, two thousand years later, continues to be repeated throughout the world, with Palestine itself still caught in a cycle of violent revenge.

All praise to you,
almighty God and heavenly King,
who sent your Son into the world
to take our nature upon him
and to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that, as we are born again in him,
so he may continually dwell in us
and reign on earth as he reigns in heaven,
now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72 (1-9) 10-15; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
Epiphany