

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Wednesday 21st December 2022

By Revd Kit Gunasekera and Marion Scott

Many thanks for this poem sent in by Marion. It reminds us that the Christmas story also reflects the darker, crueller side to our world, and that God is with all of us. Today is the shortest day of the year and from tomorrow the light will shine a bit longer each day. The Christmas story belongs to those who feel they are trapped in darkness as much as it belongs to those who feel they are bathed in light.

The Holy Innocents (Refugee) by Malcom Guite

The poem from my Anthology *Waiting on the Word* reflects on the fact that ... the fourth day of Christmas, is the feast day of the Holy Innocents. It is the day the Church remembers the story, told in Matthew's Gospel of the appalling cruelty and wickedness of Herod in ordering the massacre of innocent children, in a bid to protect his own power-base. Appalling, but only too familiar. What Herod did then, is still being done by so many present day Herods. This scarred and wounded world is the world into which Jesus was born, the world he came to save, and amongst those brought by his blood through the grave and gate of death and into the bliss of Heaven are those children of Bethlehem who died for his name without ever knowing him. But he knows them...and he says of them, to every Herod, 'Whatsoever ye do unto the least of these, ye do it unto me.'

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower

Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.