



*Homily – Requiem for the Unborn<sup>i</sup>*

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels  
Los Angeles, California  
January 21, 2012*

My brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is a joy for me to celebrate this beautiful liturgy of hope with you.

This evening we give thanks to the God our lives. We thank our Creator, our Father, for the gift of human life. We thank him for the beautiful opportunity to be alive — to love and to be loved, and to live for his glory.

We pray in a special way this evening for all the tiny souls whose lives were taken from them — before they ever had the chance to enjoy this beautiful gift from God.

As we pray for these innocent ones, the children of abortion, let us remember to pray also for all those who are also caught up in this tragedy and crime — the mothers and fathers, all the individuals in our society who contribute to our culture of abortion. Let us pray for God's healing mercy and for a conversion of hearts.

The readings from sacred Scripture that we have just heard are trying to help us to understand the meaning of all these innocent deaths and the meaning of the culture of abortion in our time.

In the context of this liturgy, our Gospel this evening gives us a kind of symbolic picture of the drama of human history — which is the struggle of good against evil, and light against darkness, and life against death.

We know that Jesus Christ is the Author of life and the true light that enlightens every person coming into the world.<sup>ii</sup> Yet from the time of his coming until our own day, the powers of death and darkness have gathered against his light, and against the life that Jesus comes to offer us.<sup>iii</sup>

In our Gospel this evening, the wicked King Herod is a symbol for all those rulers and forces in our world that are afraid and jealous of God. All those forces that seek to cast God out from the world he created and to erase the memory of him from our society.

Herod wants this world all for himself. He wants us all to live as if God does not exist. And as we see in the Gospel, the price for Herod's ambition is paid for in the lives of innocent children, in the ruin of their families.

It is still the same today, with the "Herods" of our world. The child is sacrificed. The family is under attack.

My brothers and sisters, forty years of legalized abortion in our country is too long! There have been too many innocent lives lost. Too many men and women wounded in body, mind and spirit. Too many consciences compromised. Too many Rachels weeping.

And our culture of abortion continues to cause new threats to the sanctity of human life. I am thinking especially of experiments on human embryos, the new eugenics and the idea of "designer babies," and our society's slow drift to euthanasia.

We need to dedicate ourselves once more tonight to building a culture of life in our nation — beginning in our own state.

In this regard, I hope all of you will join the California bishops in supporting two ballot initiatives for the upcoming November elections. The first is an amendment to the state constitution that would restore parents' rights to be involved before their minor children can receive an abortion. The second is legislation that would replace the death penalty in our state with a punishment of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. We believe both of these measures would strengthen the culture of life in our state.

So in this beautiful liturgy this evening, let us ask the Holy Innocents to pray for us and for our state and for our nation.

In the Tradition of the Church, the children Herod killed were some of the first martyrs for Jesus. They were the first to suffer for his name, the first to proclaim Christ by the witness of their blood. On this earth they were not allowed to live long enough to learn to talk or to walk. Yet they are in heaven now, where they follow the Lamb of God and sing his praises with joy and everlasting gladness.<sup>iv</sup>

This is why we heard that beautiful first reading, from the Book of Wisdom. In the context of our liturgy this evening, this reading gives us a message of hope for all the tiny victims of abortion in our times. This reading tells us:

*They are in peace ... their hope full of immortality ...  
They shall be greatly blessed,  
Because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. ...  
As sacrificial offerings he took them to himself.*

My brothers and sisters, our God is not the God of the dead, he is the God of the living! His love for us is stronger even than death!<sup>v</sup>

In our second reading from the Book of Revelation, we hear the beautiful promise of Jesus — that he will wipe away the tears from every eye. That there will be no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain! That he will destroy death forever and make all things new!

So we know that our world is not destined to darkness and death. We know that Jesus is the Lord of history. And we know he keeps his promises — so the powers of death will never prevail against his Church!<sup>vi</sup>

This culture of death in our society will one day pass away. We know that. So we must keep on going in our struggle for the Gospel of life. We all must do our part, my brothers and sisters!

We can never give up until our world comes to know the truth — that every child is God's own child, a precious gift and a blessing. We can never give up until our society sees that every child is created in God's own image and likeness; created in love for a reason in his plan of salvation.

My brothers and sisters, this is the beautiful truth and mystery of our religion. Our God loved us so much that he chose to enter into our world as each one of us did — through the womb of a mother. Our God loved us so much that he wanted to grow up in a human family.

That is why in our Gospel this evening, the drama is a “family drama.” On the one hand, we see the families ruined by Herod. But Herod does not win. Evil and death do not prevail. Because there is another family — the Holy Family of Mary, St. Joseph and the Child Jesus.

Our salvation comes to us through the Child Jesus in the sanctuary of the Holy Family. That is why the human child and the human family are so important to our civilization! In the child and the family we see the love of God.

In our Gospel this evening, the angel tells St. Joseph: “Rise, take the Child and his mother.” And Joseph does exactly what God asks of him.

Now this is our duty. Each one of us must hear the voice of God. Each one of us must rise and take the Child Jesus and his mother Mary into the dark night of our culture.

Like St. Joseph, we need to be guardians of the light of life, and shine that light in our world. We need to tell the world the good news of this Child — that the Son of God became a child of Mary so that every mother's child can become a child of God.

So let us pray this evening in this beautiful holy Mass to renew our faith and our dedication to the cause of life. Let us honor the lives of the unborn by our loving service to our brothers and sisters.

I entrust us all to the intercession of Mary, the Immaculate Mother of Jesus and the mother of each one of us!

---

<sup>i</sup> Readings: Wis. 3:1–8; Ps. 42; Rev. 21:1–5; Matt. 2:13–18.

<sup>ii</sup> John 1:4, 9.

<sup>iii</sup> Ps. 2:1-2.

<sup>iv</sup> Rev. 14:4.

<sup>v</sup> Matt. 22:32.

<sup>vi</sup> Matt. 16:18; Heb. 2:14.