

Christmas
2001

The Holy Innocents

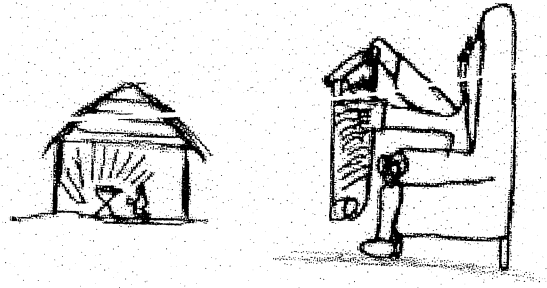
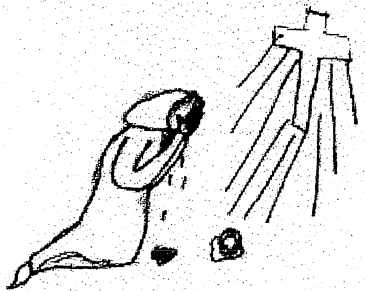
When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children:
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.
Matthew 2: 16-18*

Blood and gore so foreign seem
To the beloved Christmas scene.
Gentle icons come to mind
Whene'er we think of Christmas time:

Mother and child on hay asleep...
Shepherds tending their grazing sheep...
Angels' chorus from Heaven above
Glad in song for God's gift of love...

Animals nestled in straw on ground
Sleepily watching not making a sound...
Joseph seeing the birth of this child
Face filled with joy framing a smile.



Jarring this peaceful, idyllic sight
Cruel sounds of death are piercing the night--
Blood of Holy Innocents shed
As Herod tries saving the crown on his head.

Rachel is weeping for lives now cut short
As soldiers to Bethlehem do sally forth.
But alas, for author of this heinous deed
Blood of the Martyrs is God's kingdom seed.

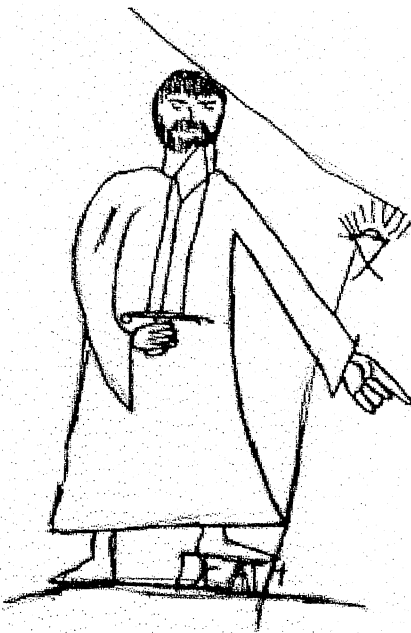
I doubt King Herod would likely believe
The plots and the twists God's mind can conceive,
But in his evil, maniacal plan,
Herod played right into God's mighty hand.

Failing to save his gold diadem
Herod's reign soon would be at an end.
His violent act of kingly rage
Played its part in setting God's stage.

As we look back to that manger bed,
Prophetic is the blood that was shed.
The child that King Herod wanted to kill
Fulfills the promise of God's holy will.

In death the seeds of life are sewn
The gospel story will make that well known.
The child now sleeping upon the stiff hay
Will soon conquer death on that first Easter Day.

No gentle icon is Jesus' birth.
It happened 'mid death and squalor of earth,
But in that dingy, stable stall
God's gracious love came to us all.



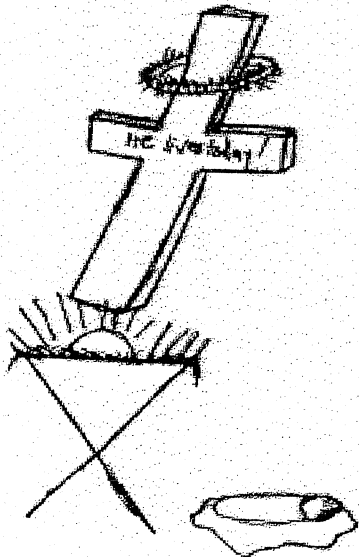
So as this Christmas Day draws near
It won't be sweet sounds that ring in my ear.
'Twill be the sound of Rachel weeping
For Innocents Holy eternally sleeping.

Her tears of sorrow for lives that are lost
Will serve as reminder of how great the cost,
The price of the gift of forgiveness and life
That saves our lost souls from eternal strife.

Prophetic indeed is the blood that was shed.
It points us to Christ and his thorn-crowned head.
He bleeds and he dies for you and for me
To give us new life and set our souls free.

Christmas is not about soft schmaltzy crèches.
It happens amid the world's biggest messes.
Christ enters the world in this humble way
To overcome death and by death win the fray.

C. Handlee Vige
Christmas 2001



May the knowledge that Christ was born the midst of the turmoil and distress gripped his world bring you peace in this troubled time. Christ's birth, death and resurrection proclaim the good news that evil is not victorious; it is the area in which God unleashes his power and wins his greatest victories.

The Viges
Pastor, Lynne, Beth and Tim

Line drawings by Tim