

## Matthew 2:13-23

### Precious lives

The lectionary takes us to a challenging place this week. In the midst of the bright lights and joy of Christmas, we have the darkness and sorrow of the story of the 'Holy Innocents', and the story of the holy family fleeing as refugees.

Both the joy of the season and the sorrow at the heart of the Gospel reading remind us that lives are precious. We reflect on this in different ways, give thanks for the precious gift and allow ourselves to be challenged to care for those in danger or sorrow.

Read this week's passage:



## Living Scripture

*'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you.'* Matthew 2:13

Christmas is for many a time of celebration with family and friends. A time of warmth, love and peace – and rightly so. But every Christmas time there are others for whom this is a different time. Today's Gospel reading makes us mindful of such. In particular, there are refugees and those who weep for their children. It is entirely appropriate therefore that, in the midst of the festivities, we pause to remember those for whom life is difficult or dangerous. Throughout Advent we were reminded that the child to be born would be called Immanuel – which means God is with us. Today we remember that Immanuel was a refugee. That God knows first-hand what it is to be homeless. And that God does care. Who can you think of that is grieving or vulnerable today? What would comfort and support mean to them? How can you pray or offer care to those who are vulnerable?

## First impressions

- What things remind you that life is precious?
- How can you treasure life yourself, and the lives of others?
- What situation(s) would you like to pray for, where you feel that lives should be more valued?



## REFLECT



Read or watch this charming, animated story (32 mins long) and think about what the characters did when they were afraid or in danger, and how the characters cared for each other and kept one another safe. How have you known God's help in such times?

## Discuss

Find photos of family members when they were aged two or under. Talk about what life was like for them – e.g. who they lived with, where they lived, what clothes they wore, favourite toys. How does that compare to your early childhood/that of other families around the world now?

## ENJOY

Host a family party, planned by the children.

Find more free Roots resources to reflect on this week's theme:



## Pray

Lord, at this time of bright lights and celebrations, thank you for the joy and blessings of the season. Please help us, as we go, to remain mindful of those who see more darkness than light and feel more sorrow and joy. Help us to do all we can to show them your love. Amen.



## Pray



Place some pictures, on a table or on the floor, of innocent lives that have been cruelly lost in recent days. Make and bring symbols of love, prayer and condolence to place around the pictures. These could include simple cards, posies of flowers or lighted candles (With suitable precautions to avoid a fire risk). Alternatively, you could lay your hand on each picture in turn, praying for the person as you do so.

## ACT

Find out about a project that supports refugees (either locally or a global organisation, such as the British Red Cross). Plan an action that you or your church could take to support refugees.