

If you have a child or a grandchild two years old or under, would you please stand. Now imagine this. The governor of the State of Missouri has authorized a state-sponsored drive-by shooting of all children age two and under in your neighborhood. As good citizens, you are expected to comply with the order and proudly have your children ready. It's not real, you may be seated.

Quite honestly we don't know if Matthew's story is real either; there are other histories of King Herod outside the Gospel, and none of them mentions that he slaughtered innocent children. But what we do know about Herod is no better. He killed his mother-in-law, his brother-in-law, and his own wife. Well, one of his wives. No one doubts he was a ruthless creep of the first class.

In contrast to him we have Joseph, a simple man, a new foster father, swept up in enormous changes in world history, and who apparently can't even get a good night's sleep without a visit from some angel or another. Hearing that the government has taken out a contract on the life of his newborn foster son, Joseph in the middle of the night relocates his family to a foreign country until the coast is clear. He possesses the kind of character any good parent needs--a selfless care for those who cannot help themselves, and a faith which enabled him to make good choices. You could argue that the most patriotic thing for Joseph to do would be to accept Herod's wishes. But as laudable as patriotism is, it's wrong to follow a misguided leader.

The ghost of King Herod lives on in our society. No, the governor does not authorize the murder of children, but children do face similar threats from drug abuse, deadbeat dads, the waste of money on selfish pursuits, the belief that violence solves problems, and a secularism which excludes religious values from public honor.

At St. Regis we are blessed to have many families in our school and in religious education who follow the example of the Holy Family and exercise responsible parenthood in the face of all that threatens our children. But we also have parents who do not even bring their children to church and who shirk the responsibility they accepted when those children were baptized. Our kids suffer enormous threats; those threats are real, and all we have is faith. We can learn a lot from Joseph of Nazareth. If we protect our ordinary faith, God will protect our families.