

### *CRIBB<S>NOTE*

It is strange to hear a story about a powerful king being afraid of an infant. Yet, the Bible provides at least two stories that have similar and contrasting elements.

Moses was among the Hebrew baby boys in Egypt who threatened Pharaoh because the ruler feared his nation was being overrun by foreigners. Moses' life was spared when his mother placed him in a basket, put the basket in the Nile River, and ordered her daughter to follow it to see where it would land. In an ironic twist, the basket came to rest near the palace of Pharaoh, and Moses became an adopted member of the killer king's family.

The other story is the focus of this Holiday Season. Following the birth of Jesus, Herod, king of Judah, was infuriated after receiving word about the birth of a "new king." In his madness he ordered his soldiers to search everywhere and kill all baby boys under two years old. What drives such insanity? Why would soldiers follow such an order?

The stories of Moses and Jesus as baby boys are fascinating. Moses ended up in the citadel of Egyptian power; the very seat where the outrageous proclamation was given. Jesus' parents left their home in Palestine and fled to Egypt where sanctuary was given, protecting them from the jurisdictional reach of Herod. Egypt was the place of dread for Moses' people on the one hand, and refuge for the Holy Family on the other.

Unfortunately, young boys continue to pose serious threats to powerful men. Around the world and across this country, the ravages of young lives under the gun are evident in the violent decay of congested urban neighborhoods, neglected reservations, and shadowy suburban areas in America. War divides and destroys young boys who are recruited as soldiers in nations ripped apart. Child warriors are used to achieve blind ambitions of dangerously small minded national leaders who think only of their temporal power and ignore the devastating, long-lasting impact their actions have on the future of their children.

The Holiday Season is a sacred period that calls us to think deeply about the events taking place throughout the world and to imagine the possibilities of something new and different. This is a time when we listen for a clear message of hope, peace, love, and joy. We have the resources within us to become people of goodness, righteousness, and justice. Thus, we turn to the model of life personified in Jesus.

As a small child Jesus practiced the disciplines of his faith and developed an inner strength that prepared him to overcome the temptations and whimsical trappings of his society. He made an extraordinary commitment to God with the absolute resolution to honor God with his whole life (heart, mind, body, and soul). His faith was his life and he realized that Truth is God (Gandhi's interpretation).

If we were to accept Jesus as the example for our lives, we will discover the glorious faithfulness of God. It is not just a wish, desire, or prayer to be like Christ. It is studying his ways and putting into practice his teachings. Our spiritual growth and development depends on us taking a step toward God without reservation. Ultimately, we express our fidelity to and trust in God.

Pharaoh and Herod suffered deeply from the simplest and smallest whisper of a fresh start within and among the people over whom they ruled. It frightened them so severely that their authority became a mockery. The very premise of their leadership was so flimsy they could not sustain their charade without exposing their frail human nature rooted in fear.

False leadership will always be exposed. Fear and intimidation will always be used to corral the public and keep young boys in a state of confusion and timidity. But, God also has a plan. God wants all people to experience the fullness of life and to walk fearlessly with dignity.

Baby Moses matured into a God-fearing man who led his people to freedom. Baby Jesus was endowed with an understanding and appreciation for God's Covenant. He became the Savior of the world.

What will we do with our lives? Who has been born in our times to answer the call of prophetic witness? Will we also have to take a flight to Egypt in order to be saved?