



The Basilica of Our Lady of the Pilar, located in Zaragoza, is one of the most emblematic sites of Christianity in Spain and a universal symbol of devotion to the Virgin Mary. Among its many traditions, the figure of the **“infanticos”** stands out. This group of children and young choristers has, for centuries, enriched the liturgical celebrations in honor of the Virgin of the Pilar with their voices. Beyond their musical role, the “infanticos” embody a profound spiritual legacy and invite us to live our faith with purity, joy, and service. This article delves into their origins, theological significance, and inspiration for believers today.

Who Are the “Infanticos” of the Pilar?

The “infanticos” are the boy choristers of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pilar. This group consists of children and young people who receive musical, academic, and spiritual training in a deeply religious environment. Their primary mission is to accompany the liturgical celebrations at this Marian shrine, especially those dedicated to the Virgin of the Pilar, the patroness of the Hispanic world.

The term “infanticos” originates from medieval Spanish tradition, where it was used to describe children who served churches or monasteries, particularly in roles related to singing or liturgy. At the Pilar, these boys have been an essential part of worship for centuries, continuing a tradition that blends musical artistry with devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Historical Origins of the “Infanticos”

The tradition of the “infanticos” at the Pilar has deep roots in the history of the Church and sacred music. While the exact year of their establishment is unknown, records document their existence as early as the 13th century. At that time, it was common for major cathedrals and basilicas to have boy choirs to enrich liturgical celebrations. These choirs were not only aesthetically pleasing but also spiritually significant; their singing was considered a pure and sincere form of prayer, lifting the hearts of the faithful toward God.

In Zaragoza, the “infanticos” acquired special prominence due to their connection with the Virgin of the Pilar, whose devotion dates back, according to tradition, to 40 A.D. when Mary appeared to the Apostle James by the Ebro River to console and strengthen him in his missionary efforts. Since then, the Virgin of the Pilar has been a source of faith and hope, and the “infanticos” have become the musical guardians of that devotion.



The Formation of the “Infanticos”: Music and Spirituality

Being an “infantico” is not only a privilege but also a responsibility. The boys who make up the choir receive comprehensive education in three main areas:

1. **Musical Training:** They learn singing, music theory, and instrument skills, with a special focus on liturgical and Marian repertoire. Their talent is nurtured to ensure their voices convey beauty and spirituality in every celebration.
2. **Academic Education:** Alongside their musical training, the “infanticos” attend regular classes to ensure their intellectual and personal development. They are prepared to fully integrate into society once their time in the choir ends.
3. **Spiritual Formation:** The daily lives of the “infanticos” are marked by prayer, participation in the liturgy, and a close relationship with the Virgin of the Pilar. This training seeks to instill values like humility, gratitude, and service, transforming their work into a true apostolate.

Theological Significance of the “Infanticos”

The work of the “infanticos” is not merely artistic; it carries deep theological meaning. In Scripture, Jesus presents children as an example of faith and purity: “Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14). The “infanticos,” with their innocence and devotion, embody this teaching, reminding us that a true relationship with God must be free of selfishness and full of selfless love.

Moreover, their dedication to the Virgin of the Pilar highlights the importance of Marian devotion in Christian life. Mary, as the mother of Jesus and the Church, is a model of obedience and surrender to God. By dedicating their talents to her, the “infanticos” show us how our abilities and gifts can be offered as acts of worship.

The “Infanticos” Today

In the modern world, where many traditions seem to fade, the “infanticos” are a living testimony of faith and culture. The Basilica of the Pilar continues to receive thousands of



pilgrims each year, and the singing of the “infanticos” remains one of the most moving experiences for those who visit this sanctuary.

Despite societal changes, the message conveyed by the “infanticos” remains universal: the importance of beauty in faith, the value of selfless service, and the transformative power of music as prayer. Their perseverance in keeping this tradition alive invites us to reflect on how we can integrate our own spiritual traditions into a constantly changing world.

Spiritual Lessons from the “Infanticos” for Daily Life

The life and mission of the “infanticos” offer several practical teachings that we can apply to our daily lives:

1. **Dedicating Our Talents to God:** Each of us has unique gifts. The “infanticos” show us that when we put these talents at the service of God and others, they become acts of praise and gratitude.
2. **Seeking Beauty in Faith:** Music, art, and liturgy help us experience faith more deeply. Incorporating elements of beauty into our prayer or surroundings can enrich our relationship with God.
3. **Living with Humility and Joy:** The innocence and dedication of the “infanticos” remind us that true greatness lies in humility and joyful service.
4. **Honoring Mary as Our Spiritual Mother:** Devotion to the Virgin of the Pilar invites us to approach Mary in prayer, entrusting her with our joys and concerns, and asking her to guide us to her Son.

Conclusion: A Legacy That Inspires

The “infanticos” of the Pilar are not just a tradition but a living reminder of how faith can be authentically lived with beauty and devotion. Their voices, which have resounded in the Basilica of the Pilar for centuries, continue to call us to encounter God in our daily lives and to offer Him the best of ourselves.

As we contemplate the example of the “infanticos,” we are invited to ask ourselves: **How can I make my life a song of praise and service to God?** Let their testimony inspire us to live with a purer heart, a deeper faith, and a renewed commitment to our Christian



The “Infanticos” of the Pilar of Zaragoza: History, Spirituality, and an Example of Faith | 4

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