

Holy Thursday (Song of Innocence) Summary

Writer: William Blake | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

The Orphans' Procession: The poem describes a special day called Holy Thursday. On this day, poor children from charity schools in London go to St. Paul's Cathedral for a church service. The children are dressed nicely in clean clothes—red, blue, and green. They walk in lines of two. Older men, called beadle (church officials or charity school officials who guide the children), walk in front of them holding white sticks/wands.

Society's Hypocrisy: The children move into the big church like a river flowing, just like the River Thames. There are so many children. It looks like a big crowd of colorful flowers blooming in the middle of London. They sit together in groups. Each group shines with its own special beauty.

Even though there is a crowd, the children seem gentle and quiet like little lambs. They raise their hands and sing songs to God. Their voices sound powerful. Their voices are like a strong wind or soft thunder. The sound reaches up to the skies.

The poem calls the children angelic, but also criticizes the adults. The old leaders pretend to be wise caretakers. But their white sticks suggest they're strict controllers. The poet asks: Why does London have so many poor orphans?

A Warning About Compassion: The old and wise guides of the poor children were beside them. At the end, the speaker reminds us to be kind and to feel pity for the poor children. He compares these innocent children to angels. He says that if we turn a child away from our doors without kindness, we may be turning away an angel. We might not even know it.