

Hearing the Cry of the Poor

Today's Post: Pope Francis about weeping in the world (from a column by Tom Reese, sj)

"The pope first applauded the girl for expressing herself so courageously. He told the crowd of young people at Manila's University of Santo Tomas to pay attention because she "asked the only question that does not have an answer." The pope did not respond with a theological lecture on the mystery of evil. Rather, he affirmed her tears, saying, "Only when we are able to weep about the things that you lived can we understand something and answer something." He acknowledged that "the great question for all is: Why do children suffer? Why do children suffer?" But he finds an answer not in the head, but in the heart. "Only when the heart is able to ask the question and weep can we understand something." For Francis, the world needs to respond by helping the victims of disasters with aid and money. He notes that Christ cured the sick and fed the hungry, and so should we. But, he adds, "it was only when Christ wept and was able to weep that he understood our dramas."

Those who suffer need not only help but tears. "Today's world needs to weep," he said. "The marginalized weep, those left aside weep, the scorned weep ... but those of us who lead a life more or less without needs, don't know how to weep. Certain realities of life are only seen with eyes cleansed by tears." He then invited the young audience to ask themselves, "Have I learned to weep? Have I learned to weep when I see a hungry child, a drugged child on the street, a homeless child, an abandoned child, an abused child, a child used as a slave by society?" Or do we only weep when we want something for ourselves? "Why do children suffer?" Francis asked. "The great answer we can all give is to learn to weep." He pointed to the example of Jesus in the Gospels. "He wept for his dead friend; he wept in his heart for that family that had lost their daughter; he wept in his heart when he saw that mother, a poor widow, taking her son to be buried; he was moved and wept in his heart when he saw the multitudes like sheep without a shepherd. If you don't learn how to weep, you're not a good Christian!" In conclusion, he says, "When we are asked, 'Why do children suffer?' 'Why does this or that happen, this tragic thing in life?' May our answer either be silence or a word born of tears. Be courageous; don't be afraid to cry." The mystery of evil is beyond my comprehension. The answers that I have heard I find unsatisfactory. I don't find any words in the Bible that explain it. I have concluded that since it is beyond our comprehension, Jesus came not to explain suffering but to weep with us and to suffer with us. I prefer to see the cross not so much as reparation for our sins, but as God's way of joining us in our suffering. Instead of preaching from the sidelines, he gets down in the dirt and suffers with us."