

The Creed of Tears

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Una trabajadora de Cruz Roja abraza al migrante que ha logrado cruzar uno de los espigones fronterizos de Ceuta (FOTO: EFE)

Time to cry

What challenging times we are going through - not only because of what coronavirus is revealing to us in our societies, with its wake of economic, social and affective precariousness; but also because of what is happening before our very eyes. Thousands of people fleeing their homelands in search of food, work and security. We see it daily in families or even minors travelling alone, defying all natural dangers and human corruption, seeking to reach the United States, Europe or other lands of asylum. In a chronicle of announced failures too, thousands of Afghans are trying, by all means possible, to flee their homeland because of the return of the Taliban regime that has taken over their country. So many of the "lords of the shadow" will continue to do their business abusing people's miserable situations: through the sale of weapons; or by the lucrative trade in natural resources. We know only what the media lets us glimpse, between their silences and editorial opinions. Who is talking about the civil war that continues in Colombia? Or the thousands of deaths in Mexico due to violence between drug cartels? Or of journalists imprisoned or killed in countries where there is a fear of revealing what is decided in the corridors of power, or simply a fear of the freedom of well-informed citizens? Who talks about the clashes in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, where not by chance there is the largest natural gas reserve; or the extortion in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where once again the local population is slaughtered and removed from their lands, and where once again we have the location of diamond mines and lithium deposits? Who is talking about the Rohingya, who are being ethnically "cleansed" by

the Myanmar armed forces, and who no one wants to give asylum? Each of us can extend this sad list, where with media silence, conflicts continue for years in the face of our indifference.

Our earth too cries out because of the imbalances that we have created and whose devastating consequences again and again find us unequipped and defenceless. We have seen this in the torrential rains that fell in a few hours in Germany and Belgium; in the United States in the fires that recur every year in scorching summers. We know this is the reality, repeated every year, yet it does not seem to change our lifestyles and consumption habits. Nor do we strive for a global political agenda that lays secure foundations for future development. Instead we seem to opt for simple sustainable survival. In addition, so many people who continue to cry out, like the poor, are silenced, such as the young nation of South Sudan; or the lives of millions of people in Madagascar that are threatened by droughts. And Haiti, already hit by extreme poverty affecting much of the population together with political instability, has recently suffered an earthquake which has increased the harvest of destruction and death.

The picture is bleak. Judging by this sad and sketchy landscape, I wonder if the pandemic and its consequences are helping us become more human.

Where is your God? (Ps 43:3)

The psalmist expresses the relationship with God in a dramatic way. On the one hand, God has become elusive, hidden. The only trace of his presence is a void, a silent darkness. The question about God becomes more pressing, since injustice and suffering are imposed with the force of the facts: God does not act. And those who wonder and ask us - believers and nonbelievers - echo this: "Where is your God?" In spite of everything, the psalmist considers the most suitable form of prayer to be tears. This is the psalmist's bread day and night, the food of someone stubbornly waiting for an answer, for a sign. God remains the last one to whom these tears are addressed, in the name of suffering humanity and earth.

The psalmist thus lives first hand, in the vast register of emotions, the groaning desire for a new presence of God. Tears purify the eyes of what is already known about God. They are like a compass that guides the believer through the times of God's silence and absence. At times God manifests himself in surprising closeness, where he is most desired and least expected.

This is a God who allows himself to be moved by what happens to his people, who is not pleased to see them suffer as if he were cruel or crazy. But this is also a God who takes seriously the freedom and the light that he has placed in everyone, so that, as free beings they may seek him, love him and serve him. Thus, through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, God invites his people once more to leave their proud and haughty ways, and to return with all their hearts to him. In this way, God once again believes in his people, and in what he has put in them, their freedom and their ability to respond to these incessant calls. His omnipotence is loving and is therefore respectful of what is most precious in each of his sons and daughters - his imprint - to know his freedom. Thus he assumes the risk of this relationship and is willing to suffer with his people the often labyrinthine paths of love and freedom. In effect, if you do not listen - God says to the prophet - "I will cry in secret because of your pride; I will cry bitterly" (Jr 13,17). God surprises us once again by making himself close, in the form of an absence, of silence, to show in our times, his patient and respectful love for the journey of his people.

Consistent with this feeling of God allowing himself to be affected by what happens to his people, to humanity searching for him in the dark, we see Jesus cry as he approaches and sees the city of Jerusalem: "If you too had only recognised on this day the way of peace!" (Lk 19,41). The city that bears the yearning for peace inscribed in its name, in its history and on its walls, is also the main obstacle to its realization. The prophets tried to exhort its inhabitants to turn their hearts to the living God, who shines out brightly in spite of the overwhelming signs of death. No matter how many times Jesus puts at our disposal the opportunity to receive God in the troubled times of history, the hearts of people seem impervious. The tears of Jesus are, on the one hand, the expression of a God who suffers for his people, on account of the decisions that lead to their own perdition. At the same time, they are his confession of faith in the goodness and freedom of his people, goodness and freedom in which he recognizes himself, the Son, and all the sons and daughters of God.

Ask for the gift of tears

The tears of the psalmist, and those of Jesus, are the expression of the tears of God for a free people, who, in this risky way, he continues to love. God's love is a love of proximity, of closeness, of entering into the tensions, contradictions and struggles that agitate the hearts of men and women and make the whole of creation groan with incessant labour pains. If this is so, we can ask ourselves when was the last time we cried for what we are seeing before our eyes in the world? We must ask the Lord to give us the gift of his tears, which are not tears of helplessness or disappointment, but rather tears of his patient accompaniment on the path of the adventure of human freedom, and despite everything, of his faith in the light of goodness that dwells in our hearts. Perhaps, with eyes already purified with tears, we will see Jesus in the eyes of the children of the refugee camps of Lesbos, of Lebanon or of a family that crosses the *Rio Grande*.

Fraternally,

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