

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Nov 21st 2013

As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying,

"If this day you only knew what makes for peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes." Luke 19

It is quite powerful to imagine Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and then to imagine Jesus weeping over our world today. The world simply can't be the world that he dreams it could be. I want to ask him, "Lord, tell us, what is hidden from our eyes? What is it we are missing?"

Then, I remember that Pope Francis went to the island of Lampedusa, the Italian refugee colony where a boat of refugees had sunk and many refugees lost their lives. He asked us if we had forgotten how to grieve. It is in this memory that I realized that Jesus was grieving because of his great love and compassion for those who were going to go through terrible suffering. At Lampedusa, Pope Francis asked us if, in our world today, anyone feels "responsible" for what happened there. He said these powerful words:

"The culture of well-being, that makes us think of ourselves, that makes us insensitive to the cries of others, that makes us live in soap bubbles, that are beautiful but are nothing, are illusions of futility, of the transient, that brings indifference to others, that brings even the globalization of indifference. In this world of globalization we have fallen into a globalization of indifference. We are accustomed to the suffering of others, it doesn't concern us, it's none of our business.

"We are a society that has forgotten the experience of weeping, of 'suffering with:' the globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep!"

He asks us to pray:

"Let us ask the Lord for the grace to weep over our indifference, to weep over the cruelty in the world, in ourselves, and even in those who anonymously make socio-economic decisions that open the way to tragedies like this. "Who has wept?" Who in today's world has wept?"

Pope Francis concludes with this prayer:

"O Lord, we ask forgiveness for the indifference towards so many brothers and sisters. We ask forgiveness for those who are pleased with themselves, who are closed in on their own well-being in a way that leads to the anaesthesia of the heart. We ask you, Father, for forgiveness for those who with their decisions at the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies. Forgive us, Lord!"

Today, we can turn to Mary, on this feast of her Presentation in the Temple, when she was a little girl:

Dear Mary, we remember that you were presented by your parents as a dedication of your life to service. Your parents could not have known how you would be placed in service of the redemption of our world. You said "yes" so that your Son could say "yes." We ask you to place us with your Son today, on your feast, that we might be freed from all our indifference to the suffering and cries of those around us most in need. Help us to grow closer to your Son's own heart that we might love, first of all, those who are closest to us - in our own families. Let us be instruments of healing and peace at home. And through your continuing service, allow us to see what we are not seeing now. Allow us to be touched and moved by the suffering of so many. And, with tender hearts that can grieve for others, allow us to be instruments of your Son's own compassion and love. Please pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Andy Alexander, S.J.