

ONLY MERCY IS THE TRUE REACTION TO EVIL

Dear Editor,

Once again lacerating pain knocks on our door, creating a total upheaval. In Spain, tragedy struck through the fragility of a bus driver who fell asleep at the wheel. In Belgium, the void once again showed its violent and merciless face, its “blind violence,” in the words of Pope Francis.

How can we look at these facts, as women and men, without yielding to bewilderment or rage? Only if we do not block out the urgent need for meaning, for a why, that these events provoke in each of us. The more lacerating the pain, the more boundless is the question, the prayer of entreaty, that we sense within, if only for an instant, before seeking an escape in distraction or forgetfulness from the sense of powerlessness that this question provokes in us.

We may put on a display of self-assurance, as people free of any bonds, but behind this façade we see all the depth of our need, the need each of us feels for someone to tend to our wounds, to raise us up from our affliction.

The Liturgy of Holy Week helps us in our incapacity to resolve this dramatic problem: “Omnipotent God, look upon humanity, exhausted by its mortal weakness, and grant that we may live again through the passion of Your only Son” (Morning Prayer for Easter Monday in the Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman rite). “He strikes our prostration and mortal weakness a blow for life: may life be renewed through the sacrifice, pain and death (of Your only Son)” (Fr. Giussani). In this way, Christ offers Himself as the response worthy of the boundless prayer of entreaty for a why, and at the same time communicates to us that energy without which we can neither recover nor undertake the one road for defeating violence. Both we and the others need the one and the same mercy.

Recently Benedict XVI reminded us of the reason for Pope Francis’ insistence in this Year of Mercy: “Mercy is the one true and ultimate effective reaction against the power of evil. Only in the presence of mercy do cruelty, evil and violence end.”

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