

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Reflections from Cardinal Hume

“I cannot fully explain the existence of evil and natural disasters. If I had that kind of knowledge and understanding, I would be God. But Our Lord has given us, and certainly given me, a way of entering into the mystery to try to discover some meaning, and that is his own death on the cross. It is only by looking at the crucifix that we begin to discover some kind of solution. There, and there alone, is the solution, because behind the crucifix you see, with the eyes of faith, the outline of the risen Christ. *That* is the point and that is why a crucifix is such a lovely thing.” Cardinal Basil Hume ‘The Mystery of the Cross’ p. 6

TASK

1. What answer would you give if you were asked to explain the existence of evil and natural disasters?
2. What do you think of Cardinal Hume’s answer?

‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

‘Jesus forgives them for what they are doing, for the pain they are inflicting. He is desperate almost, to find an excuse: *‘they know not what they are doing.’* Were they just obeying orders, doing what they were told by other men who were anxious to kill this prophet?’

‘Jesus forgives, ignoring, so it would seem, the question that we ask. *‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?’* Thus he prays, those words of his spoken not from weakness, but from the strength of love which he has for us.’

‘There is a deeper truth here for us to learn. It is that God seeks always to forgive. He will look for every reason to forgive, to make excuses for us, to understand. Nonetheless he looks into our hearts to find sorrow, or at least the beginning of it. He expects us to be sorry and to say so, to recognise the wrong we have done. There is comfort in remembering that he will not spurn a humble and contrite heart.’ Cardinal Basil Hume ‘The Mystery of the Cross’ p. 100-101

TASK

1. Can the soldiers be excused for their part in so grievous a crime?
2. Mention 2 of the most important things that Cardinal Hume is teaching us.
3. What does it mean to say God will not spurn a humble and contrite heart?