

My hour has not yet come!

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why was there an earthquake in Haiti? Why do so many suffer? Why do we suffer? Why is there suffering in the first place?

This age old question often comes to the forefront of our thinking and feeling when pain and suffering enter our personal space... either through another voice, like the media or personal experience; either in seeing others suffer or in our own suffering.

And as old as the question is, as manifold are the answers that try – mostly quite unsuccessfully and cruelly – to explain all of this, there seems to be a rather persistent itch in the bottom of our existence to explain why bad things happen

One of those ridiculous explanations for all the bad stuff is that it was Eve's fault. – and sadly this was believed by multitudes and brought great harm to humanity. Eve was lured in by the snake. She made a very human mistake. And the snake was merely fulfilling its role. It would be nice to blame the snake because what we so often do is so much more harmful, but the serpent was merely acting out its own role.

What we do too much of the time is blame the victim and this has an age old past. It is the eye for an eye mentality, understanding this mantra as returning harm for harm rather than what was *truly* meant, that a response should never be greater than the original deed. This meaning, unfortunately, has too often been lost in translation.

Typically, when someone experiences something very bad without it possibly being their fault, we have an explanation problem.

And when human beings have an explanation problem, we usually say all sorts of crazy and outright cruel things which I do not want to repeat here.

The book of Job tells a story of three friends trying to convince Job that his misery is all his fault... and they talk so convincingly that close to the end, Job is ready to give up ... Finally, though, it becomes convincingly clear that it has not been Job's fault.

So whose fault is it? So whose fault is it that I am in pain? That I suffer?

That the earthquake struck? Whose fault is it that bad things happen to good people? Whom can I blame for my misery... my pain? Or your pain? Or their pain in Haiti?

Was it God's fault? Or was it the devils fault? .. but since we don't believe in the devil .. What is left?

If I follow this line of thinking usually, here is the end and I have to confess: I am at a loss ... I don't know! I do not know!

And in the moment I can allow myself not having to explain everything, powerful questions come up:

One is: Why do we need to blame?

Why do we ask in the face of disaster and misery, suffering loss and pain the question: who is to blame, whose fault is it, why did it happen?

I think we do this often to cover up our feelings of helplessness.

It is very difficult to look into the face of pain and suffering. It is very difficult to let those things come close, to touch them, to feel them, to hear them. It is a shock that either brings the best or the worst out of us.

The blaming is usually part of the worst, an attempt to separate us from the tragedy that is staring into our faces, it is part of the numbing and distance to the suffering and pain all around us. And then we don't need to act and we feel less helpless, because it is not so much our problem anymore.

So where is God in all of this? And this is a very good question once we get beyond the avenging vengeful human creation of a god that makes sure that everyone gets punished properly.

So where is God in all of this? I believe I once told the story about the Christ Statue that after World War II was dug out of the rubble in Dresden. It was completely intact, except both hands were missing.

We are those hands! We can use to point with a finger or we are the hands to face the pain and the suffering and our feelings of helplessness, and expect God's help when we no longer can go on facing the pain. That is when we can count on HIS hour to be.

Almighty God give us the strength and courage to be the working hands of your peace! – there and here!