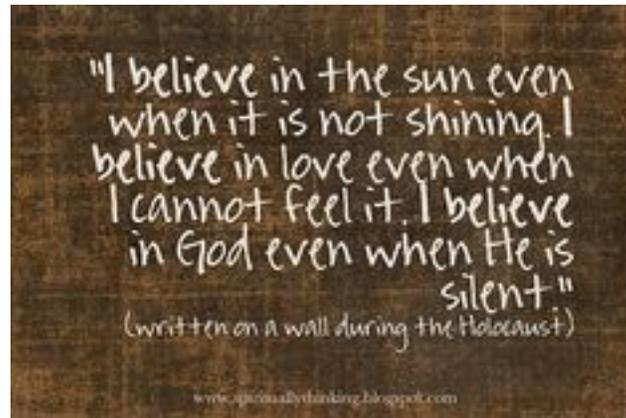


The 75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Week 43

God and the Holocaust



For some, the Holocaust signals the death of God. For them it is no longer possible to believe in a God who allows such atrocities to happen. Just as Jesus was mocked on the cross as his executioners said, "Let God deliver Him, for He trusted in God," Mt. 27:43, so was this also said to the victims of the holocaust as well, "Where is your God now? Let Him deliver you!" Was God powerless to save His own Son, or the millions of victims of the Holocaust?

To merely state that the death of Jesus, or the death of 6 million Jews and the death of millions more is God's Will risks turning the world into atheists.

Who wants to believe in this type of God?

What is threatened by the holocaust however is not God's existence but His Goodness.

What would we have said if we had walked through the gates of Auschwitz?

This is God's Will! How Good God is!

Would we have offered our suffering to God or cried out "Where are you?"

Do we too easily and too quickly and non-chalantly speak of redemptive suffering? Perhaps we do as long as it is someone else's suffering.

As long as it is not my mother or father, brother, sister or child that is murdered, then it is easy to call it redemptive suffering.

The truth is, the innocent do suffer!

Yet if the innocent do suffer, is it not more comforting to believe that their suffering is not in vain and that it has some higher purpose. If we believe that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our heavenly Father's consent must there not be some redemptive purpose to the millions of innocent men, women and children who fell to the ground in the holocaust?

On calvary, Jesus did not turn away from His Father in His suffering nor did He blame His Father.

What would He have gained by that except the miserable luxury of knowing Himself to be lost. In the face of such incomprehensible suffering and almost unanswerable questions of Auschwitz, St. Maximilian did not lose Faith.

He found an even deeper Faith that transcended suffering.
He found a Love that called him to lay down his life for another, for a stranger.
He found a Hope that could sing in the starvation bunker.

Before we ask God questions, we must ask ourselves some questions, individually and communally.

We cannot wash our hands of the Holocaust, because we are part of the human family and therefore we share in its goodness and in its evil.

We share in Hitler's and Stalin's sins just as we share in Einstein's and Mother Teresa's intelligence and goodness.

We did not fight the war of 1776, but we share in George Washington's victory and the freedom he won for us.

We therefore also share in the sins of others as well. How have we tried to overcome the sins of society?

Do we become involved and do our part no matter how small, to make the world a better place, or are we too busy or do we too easily wash our hands believing that we can do nothing?

Prayer :

Heavenly Father, with you all things are possible. A Virgin becomes a Mother, sinners become saints, and suffering becomes life giving. Increase Our Faith, Hope and Love in times of suffering so that we may rise above despair to new and eternal Life with you.

Questions and Meditations:

1. Do I doubt God in times of suffering?
2. Do I see suffering as God's Will or something I should overcome?
3. How and when has suffering increased my Faith?
4. What do I do when I see the suffering of others?