Cemetery Crucifix

Sara Bonacum
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean
Part of the Photography Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol13/iss2/15
one help people work through these deep feelings that plague them day and night?

People were also plagued by philosophical questions of meaning: What is the message/meaning of the event? Because I spoke the local language, I was able to converse with the people on this deeply unsettling topic. Buddhists and Hindus responded according to their belief in the eternal law of karma: bad things happen to you because of bad things done. One young Buddhist lady, for example, said: “All the good have been taken away. Only the bad are left. I am left here to suffer. I am one of the bad.”

When we were looking to help a Muslim village, I requested to meet the local Imam. We wanted to determine if they would accept help from Christians, since we know some Muslims want help only from fellow Muslims. We had heard that Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian representatives had already helicoptered in to see the situation. The Imam and his mosque elders quickly responded that they would accept help from anyone.

I asked the Imam and his Council members also how they were interpreting this horrendous event to their people. They gave explanations like: “This was all decided beforehand by God so that it had to happen.” “It is a warning from God that we should cease our sinful ways and follow His commands.” “God was showing that He is in charge.” “People who believed in God and died in this event went to heaven, so there was no injustice.”

The crisis of faith that occurs in events of such great suffering was reflected in the tearful comment of one Muslim woman: “I can understand if some human being would do such a cruel thing, but I cannot understand when God does it.”

If such a disaster would happen to me, what would my crisis of faith be? Since it does happen, shouldn’t it be a crisis for my faith in a just, loving God? “Tsunamis” of greater and lesser magnitude are happening all the time. How do I make sense of it? Is it just my need to make sense, but there really is no sense at all?

There are two instances recorded in the New Testament where Jesus was confronted with this question. One is in John 9 where Jesus’ disciples ask him why a man would be born blind; whose fault was it? The other is in Luke 13 where Jesus refers to those who blamed people who had experienced personal tragedy saying that they must have somehow deserved this punishment. In neither instance does Jesus provide an answer to the question of “Why?” Rather, He calls His disciples to “do the works of Him Who sent me” and to repent of their own short-sightedness in life.

When I asked Christians in Sri Lanka why this happened, they simply gave two gestures, one lifting their hands up in questioning to God and the other stretching out toward the needs around them. In response to the Muslim woman’s lament about the cruelty of God, I could only respond: “God does care for you, and we are here to share that love of God with you.”