

YOU WERE ASKING . . . by Msgr. P. M. Stilla

Q. As this pandemic continues, I am upset and surprised to hear that some individuals or groups are dealing with it by resorting to what I call, "the blame game". Why is it that when tragic events happen on a global scale or even in our own personal lives, one common reaction is to blame someone or something for causing it, without any credible evidence to back up our claims?

A. Perhaps, your question could best be answered by a psychiatrist or a specialist in human behaviour. I can, however, offer a reply from the point of view of Faith, Biblical teaching and some human history. Upset, yes, but not surprised!

This troublesome reaction to blame others to make ourselves feel better, emotionally hurts so many innocent victims. It should upset all persons of Faith because it encourages and promotes bullying, racism, and even hate motivated crimes!

However, the common use of the "blame game", in human tragedies, should not surprise us. After all, this kind of behaviour has been going on since the beginning of time. According to the writers of the Book

of Genesis, even at the dawn of creation when Adam was asked by God why he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he too played this game. His response was not to take responsibility for his action but to blame Eve and, indirectly, to blame God when he said, "it was the woman you gave me!" Then, Eve blamed "the serpent" in the garden, and so, the "blame game" began.

Old Testament Beliefs Changed by Jesus

Throughout the Old Testament, it was thought that floods and plagues were caused by God to punish humanity for their sins. Not only did the Israelites think this way but so did persons of other cultures before them. Whenever the Jews were defeated in battle it was assumed that it was God's way of punishing them for having gone astray. Likewise, whenever they were victorious, the win was interpreted as Yahweh's 'seal of approval'. It was even thought that human diseases or tragic events that happened

to individuals were caused by God, as sure signs of punishment for sins. Although Jesus corrected this misconception in the Gospel of John (9:1-41), when he cured the blind man, some Christians still believe this misconception to this day!

Some "Blame Games" in Human History

Here are a few examples of world events when "blame games" victimized millions:

◆ *Nero and the Great Fire of Rome*
In 64 A.D. when a fire nearly destroyed Rome, Nero blamed it on the Christians and an all out persecution on them ensued;

◆ *Destruction of the Temple*
When the Romans destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Jews thought that God had allowed

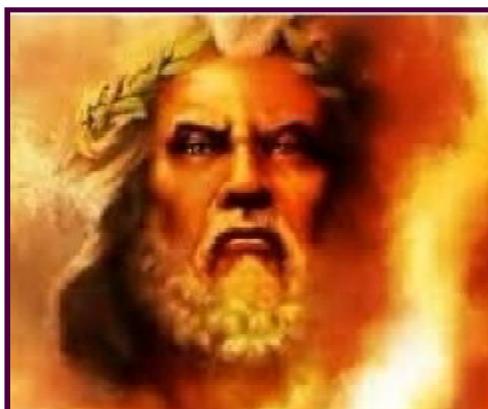
it to happen to show His displeasure with the fact that some Jews had left Judaism to become Christians. Hundreds of Christians were victimized and killed!

◆ *The Black Death (The Plague)*
In 1347, when this pandemic killed almost 200 million, some Christians thought it was God's wrath that allowed it to happen. God was angry, they assumed, because Jews were allowed to

live alongside Christians in towns. This "blame game" resulted in the establishment of Jewish ghettos;

◆ *The "Flu" Pandemic of 1918*
This pandemic which killed 50 million people was mistakenly named, "Spanish" Flu, even though it did not originate in Spain. Its name victimized Spaniards;

◆ *The Holocaust*
Among other things, Jews were blamed for the collapse of the economy in Germany after World War I. At its end six million Jews had been exterminated!
I guess we never learn from past mistakes!



"It was the woman you gave me!"
(Genesis 3: 12-13)