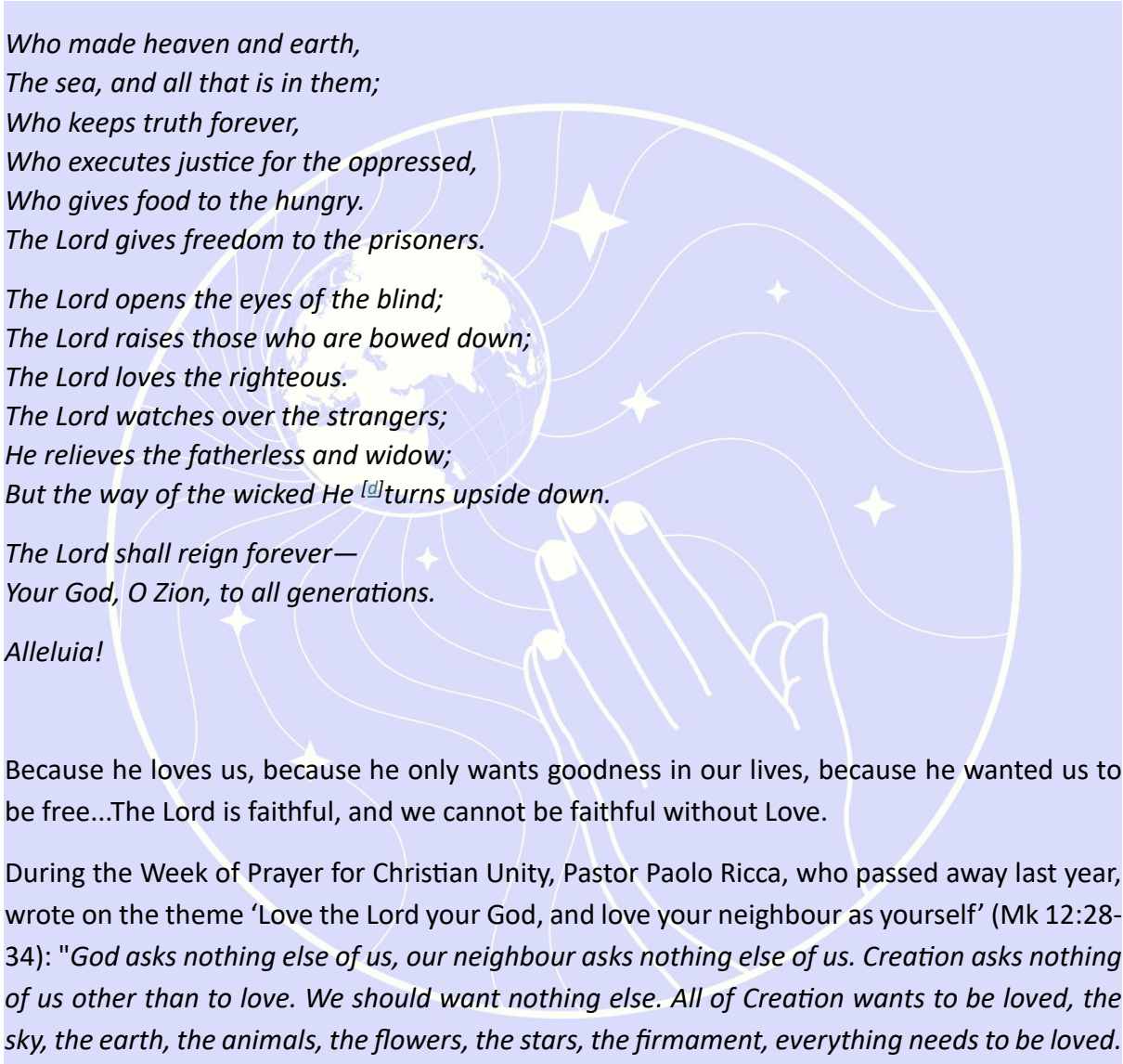


Resisting dignity, strengthened by God's faithfulness

Lamentations 3, 22-23

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

Psaume 146, 6 - 10



*Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that is in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners.*

*The Lord opens the eyes of the blind;
The Lord raises those who are bowed down;
The Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the strangers;
He relieves the fatherless and widow;
But the way of the wicked He ^[d]turns upside down.*

*The Lord shall reign forever—
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.*

Alleluia!

Because he loves us, because he only wants goodness in our lives, because he wanted us to be free...The Lord is faithful, and we cannot be faithful without Love.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pastor Paolo Ricca, who passed away last year, wrote on the theme 'Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself' (Mk 12:28-34): "God asks nothing else of us, our neighbour asks nothing else of us. Creation asks nothing of us other than to love. We should want nothing else. All of Creation wants to be loved, the sky, the earth, the animals, the flowers, the stars, the firmament, everything needs to be loved. We ourselves need nothing else, and all our lives we are beggars for love. To love: that is the meaning of life, nothing more profound, nothing more Christian and nothing more human than love. 'Love', said Saint Augustine, "Love and do whatever you want. But love!"

At the beginning of the Word of God, the story of Genesis shows that mankind's dignity and the God's faithfulness are linked. 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' affirms the inestimable value of Man. 'Adam, where are you?' shows God searching for man, after and in spite of his sin.

Human dignity is a definitive achievement that cannot be lost by any woman or man, in any circumstance: therein lies a mystery of the human being that is just as elusive as the mystery of God. The faithfulness of God and the dignity of Man find their fullest fulfilment in the mystery of the Incarnation. God becomes Man in Jesus Christ, who returns to his Father, assuring us of his faithfulness: *'And I am with you always, to the end of time'*. (Mat 28:20) 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete who will be with you always'. (Jn 14,16)

A person cannot be deprived of their dignity, nor can they lose it, since it is a permanent asset. Rather, a state of indignity is characterised by a more or less serious alteration in the perception of one's own dignity or that of others. ACAT's struggle - and not only its struggle - brings us face to face with indignity. In certain circumstances, we may be tempted to accept cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, even torture and/or the death penalty. Such treatment places the victims in a state of indignity: they do not lose their dignity, but they come to be more or less unaware of their dignity. The abuser, the torturer, even if he doesn't realise it, also puts himself in a state of indignity, because he denies the dignity of the victims and his own. And those who approve, or simply allow it to happen, participate in this state of indignity.

To resist indignity is to put into action, into prayer, our love for our neighbour, whether victim or perpetrator; it is to believe in the God's faithfulness who is always present, everywhere, to those who allow themselves to be touched by his presence.

It means loving because that is the commandment that Jesus left us.

Because God is faithful, He is our rock, and we have the certainty that everyone will be raised up because God has made the promise: this gives us courage and strength to continue the fight.

The Lord asks us to be faithful to Him in return, that is, to keep our faith committed, trustworthy, to have confidence in His promises, to be convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is the author of Salvation. In this way, through baptism, by choosing to raise from the dead, we become faithful believers: 'assured', 'persuaded'.

It is this strength that enables us because Jesus has asked us to, to turn towards our neighbour and to love him, even to the point of loving our enemies!

As Christians, let us find the strength to face up to every form of unworthiness, by remembering, in faith, that human beings derive their dignity from the indefectible image that God has imprinted of Himself in them, in an act of pure love to which He remains forever faithful!