

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 13th May

To be specially chosen

Those who are committed to defending human dignity can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this commitment ... 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you' (Jer 1: 5). We were conceived in the heart of God and for this reason 'each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.' (Benedict XVI) [Laudato Si 65]

Pope Benedict's words, quoted by Pope Francis, are balm for the soul. They picture a God who loves us unconditionally, who created us out of pure desire for our presence, who has delighted in us from the very beginning, and that delight has never wavered. There was never any lessening of that extravagant love and tenderness, never any expulsion from a mythical garden. In fact, Richard Rohr assures us that 'there is nothing we can do or say to decrease God's excessive love for us. We can refuse to believe that, we can deny it, but we cannot change it. Moreover, God's love for us does not depend on whether we are worthy, religious, or in 'the state of grace'. Baptised or not, sinners or not, we are all, always and equally, but specially, embraced by divine love. Ours is a God who always forgives, who does not fret about our sins, who never punishes in this life or in the next, who just cannot prevent the terrible atrocities of our society, but weeps powerlessly with us.

In his book *Faith Beyond Reason* Herbert McCabe OP writes that 'God is helplessly and hopelessly in love with us. Whether we are sinners or not makes no difference to him. He is just waiting to welcome us with joy and love.' Infected as many of us were, and still are, by a heretical image of an angry, punishing God, is it possible for us to believe Fr McCabe's healing statement? Rohr insists that God never changes his mind about us. He is simply always in love with us. What God does again and again is to change our minds about him. We are not forgiven because we confess our sins; we confess our sins because we are already forgiven

Once and for all, in his birth, death and resurrection, Jesus the Christ has reconciled all people with their Creator God (Heb 7: 27, 9: 12, 10: 10). And we, now, in our Sacrament of Reconciliation, want to celebrate this unrepeatable Passover mercy by forgiving all others in our lives. That is really why we 'go to confession'. Assured of God's forgiveness already, we now endeavour to spread that peace in every way possible, both personally and universally. Neither McCabe nor Rohr takes sin lightly; but for them God's love is always at the heart of our weakness, our powerlessness, our constant vulnerability. And the Sacrament of Reconciliation enables us to forever remember that the irresistible divine love that transforms our hearts must always lead to our generous forgiveness of everyone in our own lives. That's the only 'penance' that matters, 'to fill up what is missing' in the one and only sacrifice of the forgiveness of Christ (Col 1: 24).