

The Psalm response – which we say together between the first and second readings at Mass – often brings forth a deeper spiritual truth.

Today's response simply states that "The Lord upholds my life." It is short but says everything which needs to be said. We come from God and our destiny, too, is to return to our creator. Everything we have been given in life – our gifts, our talents, the love we receive – is all a gift from God. When we receive these things gratefully, we not only give thanks for them but also share them with others.

God "upholds" us in the sense that he creates and sustains us. He also upholds us in the sense that he affords us the dignity of being at the peak of his creation. God does this because he is not only a God of love, but is love itself. To lose track of this is to lose track of the 'meaning' of life. The brilliant scientist Albert Einstein reflected upon this in a letter to his daughter:

"There is an extremely powerful force that, so far, science has not found a formal explanation to. It is a force that includes and governs all others, and is even behind any phenomenon operating in the universe and has not yet been identified by us. This universal force is LOVE."

"When scientists looked for a unified theory of the universe they forgot the most powerful unseen force. Love is Light, that enlightens those who give and receive it. Love is gravity, because it makes some people feel attracted to others. Love is power, because it multiplies the best we have, and allows humanity not to be extinguished in their blind selfishness. Love unfolds and reveals. For love we live and die. Love is God and God is Love."

In prayer we turn inwards to be with the God who created us, and in our actions we turn outwards to take this love to others. Our response to the Lord upholding our lives should always be one of gratitude and humility. We are reminded of this as the ashes are placed on our heads on Ash Wednesday, and the minister says "Remember you are dust, and unto dust you shall return."

In today's Gospel Jesus tells the Apostles that he will be betrayed, put to death, and rise again after three days, but they do not understand. Instead they argue about issues of succession, about who is the greatest and who will take over after Jesus is put to death. And so Jesus pulls them up, teaching them that they must lead by imitating his example of love and self-sacrifice. They need to be servant-leaders – servants of all – especially those who are weak and helpless. Jesus symbolises this by embracing a child which he then puts in their midst.

This is a stark reminder to us that without God we are nothing. We must humbly "put on Christ" and offer his love and sacrifice to a world which sorely needs it, reminding our brothers and sisters that it is the God of love who upholds our lives.