

Novena for Paolo Eighth Day

From the Surat Al-Baqarah (The Cow)

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئاً
وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوْا شَيْئاً وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ٢١٦

Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And God Knows, while you know not.

Translation: Sahih International

Words from Paolo

This Civil War is unbearable to me. I would like to do something to stop it. The community of men and women of good will should do everything to stop it. The human Umma must shoulder the fears and wounds of the Muslim Umma with more compassion, with more solidarity, as we are all embarked together on this fragile planet. Not carrying one another's burdens makes life unbearable. [...]

Beyond all the efforts made over twenty years for the sake of dialogue, I must admit a total failure in my aspirations to support a non-violent transition to a mature democracy, for the good of our children and for reconciliation. However, I wish to return to Syria to witness and to plant a seed. [...]

I believe in the power of prayer in every situation. Our entire local Semitic tradition, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, is bearing witness to this experience: that prayer compels events, bends the arm of destiny, deviates the path of sorrow.

Extract from Paolo's Testament, in: « La Rage et la lumière », 2013

Psalm 139 (138)

You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying
down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are
there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,’

¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s
womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and
wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of
the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in
your book
before one of them came to be.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand –
when I awake, I am still with you.

¹⁹ If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,
and abhor those who are in rebellion
against you?

²² I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.