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**Christ-Centred Solidarity in a Time of Pandemic: The Theological Challenge to Contemporary Performances of Human Solidarity**

**Keywords**: solidarity, sacrifice, self-sacrifice, Colossians 1:15-20, theology and warfare

**Abstract**: The article proposes a reading of Colossians 1:15-20 for the time of COVID19, arguing that the assertion that all things 'hold together' in the incarnate Christ should lead Christians not only to practice solidarity with those most at risk, but also to evaluate societal and systemic responses to COVID19 in the light of their effects on the most vulnerable members of society. I consider the use and misuse of the rhetoric of self-sacrificial love or loving self-sacrifice, and the use and misuse of the image of warfare – arguing that in both of these areas Christian communities offer urgent challenges and correctives on the basis of their traditions of Christ-centred solidarity.

## 1. The Pandemic and the Need for Human Solidarity

In the midst of the global COVID19 pandemic and in the time leading up to the WCC General Assembly, it is both appropriate and urgent to rethink, from a theological and ecumenical perspective, what we mean when we make claims about the unity of creation in relation to Christ, and about love – Christ's love – as the source, shape and *telos* of that unity. In this essay I examine how Christian theology, and more specifically the ecumenical movement, can draw on claims about the Christ-centred unity of creation to respond to the task of imagining and performing human solidarity in the context of a global pandemic.

We should note first that claims about unity, and injunctions to unity, abound in the global public space dominated by the pandemic. Humanity, we are told, faces a common threat in the shape of the virus – and this common threat requires a shared response, a re-imagining and a new performance of our common humanity. Representatives of global institutions have voiced concerns about the failure of the international community collectively to meet this challenge – referring specifically to *solidarity* as the practice or attitude that is most needed and most at risk. In a striking address on 8th May 2020, the UN Secretary General António Guterres spoke of the need to strengthen the immunity of societies against the "virus of hate," in order to muster "every ounce of solidarity" against COVID19.[1] Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of the World Health Organisation, similarily, has recently stated that "The greatest threat we face now is not the virus itself - it's the lack of global solidarity." [2] These speeches draw attention to the gap between the unquestionable fact of human interdependence – from the local to the global level – and the various attempts of individuals and groups to recognise and respond to that interdependence, to live as if the lives of others mattered for our own, to perform solidarity in life-giving ways.

As the UN Secretary General and others have repeatedly said in their calls to global action, the COVID19 virus does not discriminate between people and does not stop at national borders. This is clearly true in the sense that the virus does not think, judge or hold prejudices; and it is also true that the situation of pandemic affects everyone. It is clearly not true, however – as the Secretary

[1]António Guterres, "We Must Act Now to Strengthen the Immunity of our Societies against the Virus of Hate," United Nations, 8 May 2020, https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/we-must-act-now-strengthen-immunity-our-societies-against-virus-hate.

[2] As reported in "Coronavirus: Worst could be yet to come, WHO warns,", BBC, 29 June 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53227219.

General went on to acknowledge – that the ways in which *people* discriminate make no difference in a time of pandemic. As with all crises, those individuals and communities with more existing resources are best equipped to withstand and respond to shocks. Historic patterns of discrimination and injustice, at global, national and sub-national levels, make *all* the difference to the urgency and severity of the challenges faced. More than this, however, the need for collective response, and for society-wide and systemic changes, has exposed very sharply, across the globe, the different ways in which the unity of a society is imagined, and the material impacts that these different social visions can have. When society (global, national or local) is spoken about, where is the centre and where are the margins? Who is assumed to have agency and control? Whose interests, perspectives and needs are prioritised, and who is either ignored or expected to carry disproportionate burdens and risks? In a catastrophically unequal world, what does it really mean to say "we are all in this together"?[3]

In my own context in the UK, for example, the disproportionately high death rate in Black and Asian communities has exposed the effects both of long-term structural discrimination and of continuing blind-spots in policy making (as the response to the pandemic has failed to take account of, and adjust to, the specific needs of racial and ethnic minorities).[4] Claims by those in power to care about and safeguard *all* human lives – because we are all in this together – have been exposed, in many countries of the global North, as ideological concealments of the systemic neglect and devaluing of the lives of minoritised communities. To insist that "Black lives matter", in this context, is to challenge the unjust and deadly effects of an existing vision of societal unity – and to call for a new performance of solidarity, requiring a different way of imagining what it is for humanity to be "all in this together."

What do Christian communities offer in a time that calls for new forms of solidarity – with intensified attention to interdependence and intensified awareness of structural injustice? In this article I consider the implications for a time of COVID19 of a vision of a *Christ-centred unity calling for Christ-centred solidarity*, drawn from Colossians 1:15-20. First, I argue that the assertion that all things "hold together" in the incarnate Christ should lead Christians not only to practice solidarity with those most at risk, but also to evaluate societal and systemic responses to COVID19 in the light of their effects on the most vulnerable members of society. Second, I apply these insights specifically to two aspects of the rhetoric, or the imagining of societal unity, in the time of COVID19 – the use and misuse of the rhetoric of self-sacrificial love or loving self-sacrifice, and the use and misuse of the image of warfare.

## 2. Understanding Human Solidarity in Christ: "In Him All Things Hold Together"

[3] On "we are all in this together,", see another statement by António Guterres: "We Are All In This Together: Human Rights, Covid19 Response and Recovery,", United Nations, 23 April 2020, https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and. The slogan "we're all in this together" has been used extensively by politicians in my own UK context in recent months, and met with considerable scepticism because of its political history – having previously been used in connection with a drastic programme of government cuts that disproportionately affected the poorest people. For an example of this scepticism, see the title of the report by the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, *We're All In This Together? Local Area Profiles of Child Vulnerability*, Children's Commissioner for England, April 2020, https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/cco-were-all-in-this-together.pdf.

[4] Public Health England, *COVID-19: Understanding the Impact on BAME Communities*, June 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-understanding-the-impact-on-bame-communities .

The so-called Christ-hymn in Colossians 1:15-20 provides one obvious biblical starting-point for reflection on unity in Christ, seen in its global, societal and political as well as – and in connection to – its ecclesial dimensions. Christ as the "image of the invisible God" (1:15) is named here as the source, the animating centre and the *telos* of creation. This applies both to all particular creatures (with specific locations and specific natures – in the heavens and on earth, the visible and the invisible, 1:16) and to *the* creation understood as an interconnected unity, a cosmos. The frequently-repeated "all" does not simply refer to each and every thing, but to the whole. Looking specifically at verse 17 – "in him all things hold together" – an oft-cited commentary suggests that it is through Christ that creation constitutes "a cosmos instead of a chaos."[5] I have suggested, however, that the key issue for the time of covid19 is not whether we inhabit a cosmos – an interdependent and ordered whole in which all things hold together and we are all in this together – but rather how that cosmos is to be imagined and what kind of solidarity it calls for. Merely to note that we are part of an interrelated and complex system – as the global development of the pandemic reminds us every day – does not say anything about the character of that system or about how we engage with it.

From the perspective of the Colossians Christ-hymn, the core insight is not simply that "all things hold together" – that there is a cosmos instead of a chaos– but that they all hold together *in Christ*. The incarnation of the Son – God's 'dwelling' in flesh and history (1:19), in the history that centres on the cross (1:20) and the resurrection (1:18) – is the basis for understanding what it is for creation to hold together. When we yearn for chaos to be overcome we look, from Christian theology, not just towards *any* order, but towards a christomorphic order – which is itself, moreover, an "order" that reflects the order of God's own life, the loving relations of mutual donation in the life of the Trinity.[6]

In the introductory materials for this special issue, the question was asked as to whether love can inform political solidarity. Considering this question from the starting-point of the Colossians text, we can develop the theological contours of a response. First, the love that constitutes God's own life is present in, with and for creation, not as an alien imposition but as its heart and centre –the basis of the creation's interdependence and order, its condition as cosmos. The form this love takes within creation, the image of the invisible God, is the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In other words, "order" without attention to love – as seen, for example, in a response to the pandemic that seeks to return society as fast as possible to a previous order that systematically disadvantages certain individuals and groups – has little to do with the vision of interdependence held out in Colossians.

To the extent that pandemic responses are aimed at bringing back or preserving order to the world, Christian communities can and should challenge the vision of "normality." Moreover, the particular emphasis that is given in the Colossians text to "thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities" (1:16) should draw attention to the dangers of relying on principles of order other than the order both given and revealed in Christ. Even within the comprehensive and integrated vision of the Christ hymn – drawing in not only all things but also all times – there is a clear indication of tension, a starting-point for the naming of present and temporary *dis*order. There are powers and authorities that make an illegitimate claim to be the ordering principle of "all things" but in fact generate chaos

[5] J.B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 156. For an example of contemporary use of Lightfoot's phrase, see Jerome Murphy O'Connor, OP, "Colossians," in John Muddiman and John Barton, eds., *The Pauline Epistles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 204-215, here 205.

[6] See for a key contemporary account of the relationship between Christology and creation, which includes an extensive treatment of the relationship between the particularity of the incarnation and the cosmic role of Christ, Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). On Colossians 1:17 and its anthropological and ecclesiological implications, see in particular 226-7, 252.

and break the bonds of solidarity. The one in whom all things hold together is the victim of the globalising project of *pax Romana.*

How does this critical response to the "thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities" relate to a practice of solidarity? The term in Colossians 1:17 translated as "hold together" appears elsewhere in the New Testament as a transitive verb for "standing with" another – sometimes in the sense of "commending" or "vouching for," (Romans 16:1; 2 Corinthians 10:18), but sometimes simply "being alongside" (Luke 9:32). We might look here, I suggest, for an indication of the ethical and political implications of the Colossians Christ-hymn; we come to understand the unity of all things in Christ through particular acts of standing with others, acts of solidarity.[7] Christ is both the pattern of how this solidarity works, as he stands with the victims of structural injustice, and the one whose presence is recognised in the act of solidarity with the neighbour in need.[8]

What does this mean in concrete terms – as Christians and their communities struggle to "hold together" in the face of the multiple challenges of a global pandemic, while also asking critical questions about societal responses? First, if all things hold together *in Christ* who is named as the head of the body (1:18), then the 'overview' of how all things hold together – the perspective from which the global system can be viewed and directed – is the perspective of the incarnate Christ. This means, firstly, that the source and goal of societal order is not an idea or an ideal, but a person in history. We learn how things hold together by a living relation to Christ - lived out in relation to the neighbour. Second, the form that this living relation takes is solidarity according to the pattern of Christ's solidarity – solidarity that moves towards the margins and that gives away the power it holds. In our present context this might motivate us, for example, to evaluate global and societal responses to a pandemic in terms of their impacts on those who are least powerful, who have suffered most from social and economic injustice, who experience global systems as systems of domination and exclusion.[9]

Colossians 1 makes a close and striking association between cosmic ordering and *ecclesial* ordering; "in him all things hold together and he is the head of the body, the church" (1:17-18). In the context of the ecumenical movement, I suggest, it is important to read this ecclesial claim as a political claim and to maintain the focus on Christ – so, not to set the church apart from "the world" as a social form uniquely protected against distortions of its ordered interdependence, but rather to treat this ecclesial image as showing what kind of society emerges from the recognition of unity in Christ and the practice of Christ-centred solidarity. In its wider New Testament context, the ecclesial body metaphor works to emphasise unity in diversity, along with interdependence. No "body part" can extricate itself from the organism in order to make a judgement about the whole (1 Corinthians 12:15-16). So any statement about human solidarity in the context of the global pandemic, any claim

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[7] See Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalised World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014) for a recent theological account of solidarity shaped by the author's participation in the ecumenical movement.

[8] In this regard it is helpful to read the Colossians Christ-hymn alongside the Christ-hymn in Philippians 2, in which Christ takes the "form of a slave" (2:7), and his human life is characterised by humility (2:8).

[9] An important example in the UK context is the rapid spread of COVID19 among people in prison, exacerbated by lack of public concern and lack of timely governmental response; see Christopher Kay, "COVID-19 in Custody: Responding to Pandemics in Prisons in England and Wales," *British Journal of Community Justice* (May 2020), preprint available at https://www.mmuperu.co.uk/bjcj/articles/covid-19-in-custody-responding-to-pandemics-in-prisons-in-england-and-wales; and for a response to the situation from the perspective of prison chaplaincy, John Plummer, "Prison Chaplains and the Pandemic – Responses to Covid-19," St Martin's in the Fields / HeartEdge, April 2020, https://www.heartedge.org/main/news/post/236-prison-chaplains-and-the-coronavirus-pandemic-responses-to-covid-19.

that we are "all in this together," is always being made from a particular location; there is no outside perspective. The leader or the expert or the commentator, who makes judgements about how to respond to the pandemic on behalf of the whole population, is also caught up in, and affected by, the network of embodied relations about which she speaks; well-publicised cases of national leaders contracting COVID19 have served to emphasise this. It is important, however, not to allow the visible vulnerability of leaders to create a false impression that all individuals are affected *equally* – in a way that would falsely individualise the challenge of the pandemic and pull us back from recognising societal interdependence.

The image of the body is an image of inescapable connection, and also of differentiation – including the different vulnerabilities and needs of different members of the social body. Historically, including within Christian history, the body as an image of differentiated order - cosmic, societal or ecclesial order - has frequently been used to reinforce hierarchies of power and value and to sustain oppression; those who are accorded less important roles (by virtue of class, race, gender or other factors) are told that they should keep in their place for the good of the whole.[10] To talk about the societal or ecclesial order in terms of a 'body' without attention to the christomorphic character of the social body – and without recognising the accompanying call for honour to be given to the *weakest* or least 'honourable' parts of the body – does not contribute to the global solidarity that is now required.

There are valuable lessons to be learned here from the calls to solidarity that emerged from the AIDS pandemic. In that context, as was persuasively argued, solidarity required first and foremost the costly recognition that a crisis predominantly affecting churches in the global South was a crisis for the *whole* church – that the lives of Black people living with AIDS mattered for the whole church, that the body of Christ as a whole had AIDS.[11] The present pandemic has been recognised very quickly as a globally shared problem – not least, we might assume, because communities in the global North were hit hard at an early stage. However, there is still the risk that this shared problem will be addressed primarily from the perspective of, and in the interests of, those groups and communities who already hold most of the power. The global ecumenical movement can offer an alternative perspective by putting forward a vision of

It is important to recognise the broad implications of the call to solidarity – particularly in a time marked by social distancing and isolation, when physical "standing alongside" or direct individual contact may be reduced. Clearly, the immediate imperative to recognise Christ in the presence of the needy neighbour (as paradigmatically in the "parable of the sheep and the goats" in Matthew 25) still looms large in the context of the pandemic. Individual Christians and Christian communities worldwide are engaged in emergency care and assistance for those who are immediately affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the economic shock that it provokes. A societal crisis that affects social and economic systems, however, has required systemic responses; many of the actions that

[10] For a discussion of the hierarchical background of the "body politic" image – as well as a proposal for a rereading of 1 Corinthians 12 that emphasises enacted solidarity and the importance of the incarnation and cross for interpreting the language of "body of Christ" – see Yung Suk Kim, "Reclaiming Christ's Body (*soma christou*): Embodiment of God's Gospel in Paul's Letters", *Interpretation* 67/1 (2013).

[11] The statement "the body of Christ has AIDS" is perhaps most strongly associated with Musa Dube – see Musa Dube, *A Theology of Compassion in the HIV&AIDS Era: Module 7 of the HIV&AIDS Curriculum for TEE Programmes and Institutions in Africa* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007), 76. For further discussion see Adriaan van Klinken, "When the Body of Christ has AIDS: A Theological Metaphor for Global Solidarity in Light of HIV and AIDS," *International Journal of Public Theology* 4 (2010), 446-465; Elia Shabani Mligo, *Jesus and the Stigmatized: Reading the Gospel of John in a Context of HIV/AIDS-Related Stigmatization in Tanzania* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 4-6.

are being recommended to, or demanded from, individual Christians and Christian communities are not directly focused on one-to-one relationships of care and compassion. It is not only (as in Matthew 23) difficult to see the face of Christ in the face of the neighbour; it is difficult even to see the face of the neighbour whose life is affected by our action or inaction. This condition of distancing makes the *political* dimension of solidarity, and the broad global and ecumenical vision held out by the Colossians 1 text, all the more important. Urgent questions arise, as we survey the effects of the pandemic, about how *the nations*, as systems and structures, are succeeding or failing in their responses to the hungry, naked, sick or imprisoned person with whom Christ is identified.[12] The vital act of solidarity may be the act that moves one's nation or community in the direction of effective care for the most vulnerable people – whether by a cry of protest or by the donning of a mask.

In the concluding section of this essay, I address further specific respects in which Christian communities, recognising the Christ-centred unity of "all things" and acting in solidarity moved by love, might need to call into question the political rhetoric around COVID19, particularly in societies whose culture is deeply shaped by Christianity.

## 3. **Troubling our Visions of Human Solidarity: The Question of Self-Sacrifice**

Self-sacrificial love, or loving self-sacrifice, as supreme virtue is deeply embedded in the moral vocabulary and assumptions of Christian societies. The love that sacrifices itself for others, even to the point of death, is the love than which there is no greater; it is both the supreme form of *imitatio Christi* and the *telos* of the transformation of human life brought about through incorporation into the body of Christ. Clustered around the image of loving self-sacrifice are a host of other virtues and injunctions; to consider others more than oneself, to give away all one has, to be careless of one's own needs and interests.

In the context of a pandemic, it is easy to identify individuals and groups who exemplify loving self-sacrifice – most notably medical staff and those caring for the sick. Their work makes them extremely vulnerable both to the disease and to its worse effects.[13] In the rhetoric of national leaders these "front line" staff are often compared, explicitly or implicitly, to the military; they are risking their lives in battle against a deadly enemy, *so that others* – their patients, or any other members of society not engaged in "front line" work – *may live* lives of flourishing. Alongside this military-heroic imagery, they are compared to angels or called saints; they are contemporary paradigms of the life to which all are supposed to aspire. Around these heroic/angelic figures cluster other groups who make noble sacrifices for the sake of the general welfare; people who care for children or vulnerable adults in difficult circumstances, people coping with the loss of jobs and income, perhaps even those who perform everyday acts of neighbourly kindness. Moreover, at least in the context from which I write, the collective recognition and celebration of the pandemic's heroes and saints appears to generate its own "contagion" of neighbourly sentiment and practical action.

Much of the moral vocabulary of the pandemic, then, fits neatly into the moral vocabulary of Christian love. The Christian churches, I suggest, can celebrate and give thanks for the extraordinary acts of self-sacrificial love that have characterised many individuals' and communities' responses to the pandemic. They can and should do this while maintaining a prophetic witness concerning *who* is

[12] The importance of reading Matthew 25 as a scene of judgement of the nations – and not only of their individual members – is discussed in Esther Reed, *Theology for International Law* (London: T&T Clark 2013), 21.
[13] See International Council of Nurses, "More than 600 Nurses Die from COVID-19 Worldwide", 3 June 2020, https://www.icn.ch/news/more-600-nurses-die-covid-19-worldwide.

being asked to make sacrifices and *for what end*. Extended critical theological reflection on the ideal of loving self-sacrifice or self-sacrificial love over recent decades has identified risks in its use that contemporary society would do well to bear in mind, and to recall when reflecting critically on the depiction and treatment of healthcare workers and others whose sacrifices are lauded in the COVID19 crisis.[14] In brief - the image of Christ's death, and the love commandment that (at least in the Johannine literature) ties that death so closely to acts of loving self-sacrifice by the followers of Christ, is misused and abused when it serves to preserve rather than to overturn exploitative relationships and systems. Christ's death and resurrection overthrows the power of the system that demands sacrifices to maintain the "thrones and authorities." To demand selfless service to the point of self-sacrifice from people who are systematically disempowered, for the sake of maintaining the very social order that disempowers them, is a catastrophic failure of solidarity. It constructs and maintains an order based on the 'thrones and authorities' rather than the incarnate and crucified Christ.

From the perspective of Christ-centred solidarity, Christians should be particularly concerned about any suggestion in a time of COVID19 that a certain level of death and loss – a deliberate or permitted 'sacrifice' of some lives – might be acceptable or even necessary for the greater good. The power of the ironic prophecy of Caiaphas in the Fourth Gospel – that is expedient that one man should die for the people (John 11:50 and 18:14) – lies in the fact that the person who utters it wants to sacrifice *someone else* for a notion of the greater good or the right order of things (which coincides neatly with maintaining his own position of authority). Christ both fulfils the prophecy and entirely subverts its intention. As suggested in the discussion of solidarity, above, the "holding together" of all things in Christ – the order he establishes – allows no life to be expendable; this is a unity that emerges from attention to, and solidarity with, the most marginalised or "expendable" person, the one whom the 'thrones and authorities' are prepared to allow to die.

There are very real risks – risks that come to the fore particularly in Christian feminist theology – that the moral imperative of loving-self-sacrifice is used to perpetuate exploitation; people feel obliged to continue making unsustainable sacrifices and taking an unfair share of the burden. Even if they themselves do not recognise the imperative of sacrifice, the sacrificial actions *imposed on them* can be used to create "good news stories" that conceal failures of justice or of leadership. A comparable case of the widespread use and abuse – on a national scale – of sacrificial language drawn from Christian theology might be seen in the rhetoric around warfare; in the context of the the First World War, for example, as notably identified in the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and others, heroism of soldiers' sacrifices was used to divert attention from the succession of catastrophic military failures that cost them their lives.[15]

Indeed, Christian traditions of critical reflection on the use and misuse of the language of warfare suggests a further area in which theologians and Christian communities should challenge the way in which human societies are imagined in the context of COVID19. The response to COVID19 is, on the face of it, a situation in which the lack of resemblance between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world – or between the christomorphic "world order" and the attempts of national elites to impose or maintain orders on the world – becomes particularly easy to see, at least for those accustomed to looking for it. As suggested already in the speeches by international leaders

[14]Christian feminist theology is a key *locus* for critical reflection on the use and misuse of the language of sacrifice. See for examples of recent discussions, Esther McIntosh, "The Concept of Sacrifice: A Reconsideration of the Feminist Critique," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 /2 (2007), 210-229; Kelly Denton-Borhaug, "War-Culture and Sacrifice," *Feminist Theology* 18/2 (2010), 175-191.

[15]As depicted perhaps most powerfully in Wilfred Owen's "Parable of the Old Man and the Young".

quoted earlier in this article, national self-regard and national pride are obstacles to the global solidarity that is needed to confront the challenge of COVID19 - just as collective as well as individual self-regard and pride impedes the solidarity of Christians within the body of Christ and results in a failure to recognise Christ in the neighbour. Given the enormous risks that nationalism poses to the collective welfare of humanity, it is disturbing how fast some world leaders have reached for the language of warfare to describe the current situation. We are told that we are engaged in a war against a hidden enemy, a battle that we must win, a struggle to the death. The problem is – as noted already by the UN Secretary General in the speech quoted above – that the language of warfare is most "at home" when it is directed against identifiable and visible enemies; the "battle" against the virus becomes a battle against racial minorities or migrants who are perceived as carrying the virus, or it is used to fuel and exacerbate existing social divisions.

The mere adoption of the rhetoric of warfare in the time of covid19, then, carries risks of a loss of global solidarity; it exaggerates the power that "strong leaders," "strong nations" and strong people actually have in relation to the virus, and encourages them to demonstrate power through the domination of others. In response to this latest manifestation of the idolatrous worship of power, Christian communities might seek instead to advance and encourage an awareness of shared *weakness* and need – encouraging humanity to live with our situation as creatures who need to be "held together", who do not control our own beginning or end, and who are called to place our hope in a figure of weakness rather than strength.

Where and how do we come to see Christ's love moving the world to reconciliation and solidarity in this time of pandemic? I have suggested that to understand the world as united in and through Christ's love – in and through Christ as the "image of the invisible God" – is to understand the unity of the world through acts and attitudes of solidarity. Christ-centred solidarity challenges dominant visions and rhetorical performances of societal unity by focusing on the people who are marginalised, rendered critically vulnerable, placed at risk, sacrificed or scapegoated both before and during the global response to COVID19.