

Word of Life
October 2021

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.” (Romans 8:28)

The passage we propose to put into practice this month is taken from Paul’s letter to the Romans, which is a long text, full of reflections and teachings. It was written before his departure for Rome in order as to prepare his visit to that community, which he did not know personally.

Chapter 8 emphasizes in a particular way the new life according to the Spirit, and the promise of eternal life that awaits individuals, peoples and the entire universe.

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.”

Every word of this sentence is full of meaning. Paul proclaims that first, as Christians, we have come to know God’s love and become aware that every human experience is part of God’s great plan of salvation.

Everything, Paul says, contributes to the fulfilment of that plan: suffering, persecution, personal failures and weaknesses, but above all, the action of God’s Spirit in the hearts of the people who welcome him.

The Spirit still gathers up the groaning of humanity and all of creation (Rom 8:22–27) and makes them his own. This is the guarantee that God’s plan will be fulfilled.

Our part should be to actively respond to God’s love by loving, entrusting ourselves and all our needs to the Father, and witnessing to the hope in the new heavens and new earth (see Rev 21:1) that he prepares for those who trust in him.

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How, then, should we welcome and accept this demanding proposal in our everyday lives?

In a commentary to this biblical phrase in 1984, Focolare founder Chiara Lubich suggested the following.

“First of all, we must never stop at the purely external, material or profane aspect of things, but believe that every circumstance is a message with which God expresses his love for us. We will then see how life, which may seem to us like a piece of fabric that is full of knots and threads woven together in a haphazard way, is something else: it is the marvelous design that God’s love is weaving, based on our faith.

“Secondly, we must trustingly and totally abandon ourselves to this love always, both in small and large things that happen in life. Indeed, if we know how to entrust ourselves to God’s love in ordinary circumstances, he will give us the strength to entrust ourselves to him even in the most difficult moments, such as when we suffer, experience illness or at the very point of death.

“So let us try to live in this way, not out of self-interest — so that God can show us his plans and we find consolation in him — but only out of love. We will see how this trusting abandonment is a source of light and infinite peace for us and for many others.”

Let us trust in God when we have difficult choices to make, just as O. L. from Guatemala did:

“I was working as a cook in a nursing home. From down the corridor, I heard an old lady asking for a glass of water. I knew the regulations stated that I should not leave the kitchen, but I poured some water and gently offered it to her.

“The old lady’s eyes lit up. Halfway through the glass, she took my hand and said, ‘Stay with me for ten minutes!’

“I explained that I should not and that I risked being fired from my job. But that look of hers ... I stayed.

“She asked me to pray together ‘Our Father ...’ At the end she said, ‘Sing something please.’ I remembered the words, ‘We will take nothing with us, only love ...’

“The other residents stared at us. The woman was happy and said, ‘God bless you, my daughter,’ and died shortly afterwards.

“I lost my job because I had left the kitchen. My extended family needed my financial support, but I was happy and at peace. I had responded to God, and that woman was not alone when she took the most crucial step in life.”

Letizia Magri

Next month:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Mt 5:9)