

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God." (Rom 8:28)

The Word we are proposing to live this month is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans. This is a long text, full of reflections and teachings and was written before his departure for Rome. Its purpose was to prepare the community, which Paul did not yet know in person, for his visit.

Chapter 8 in particular places emphasis on new life according to the Spirit and the promise of eternal life that awaits individuals, peoples and the entire universe.

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Every word of this sentence is full of meaning.

Paul proclaims that, first and foremost, as Christians we have come to know God's love and are aware that every human experience is part of God's great plan of salvation.

Everything - Paul says - contributes to the fulfilment of this 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 cries of humanity and of all of creation 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 with our love, entrusting ourselves and all our needs to the Father. We should witness to our hope in the new heavens and new earth 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?

Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich, suggested: *'First of all, we must never stop at the purely external, material or worldly aspect of things, but believe that every circumstance is a message through which God expresses his love for us. We will then see how life, which may seem to us like a piece of material, full of knots and threads haphazardly woven*

together, is in reality something else: it is the marvellous design that God's love is weaving on the basis of our faith. Secondly, we must always, trustingly and totally abandon ourselves to this love, in the 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 during a great trial, an illness or at the very moment of death. Let us then try to live in this way, not out of self-interest - so that God can show us his plans and we obtain consolation from 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's 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 drink 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 shouldn't and that I risked being fired from my job. But that look of hers ... I stayed. She asked me to pray together: "Our Father...". And at the end she said, "Sing something please." I remembered the words "We will take nothing with us, only love...". The other residents were staring 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 important step in life.'*

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