

## Word of Life November 2016

*We can learn Paul's secret. We can do all things when we discover the constant presence of Jesus in our lives and work in partnership with him.*

### **I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Phil 4:13)**

There are moments when we feel happy, full of strength and everything seems light and easy. At other times we are afflicted by difficulties that make our days bitter. These can be the result of tiny failures in loving the people around us or our inability to share our ideal of life with others. Or we can be hit by illness, money troubles, family problems, inner doubts or trials, loss of work, the effects of war, which crush us and seem to have no let-up. What is especially burdensome in these things is feeling ourselves forced to face the trials of life alone, without support from someone who can give us the crucial help we need.

Few people like Paul have experienced such intense joys and pain, successes and lack of understanding. And yet confronting all risks he managed to carry on with his mission, without giving in to discouragement. Was he a superhero? No, he felt himself weak, fragile, inadequate, but he had a secret, one he shared with his friends in Philippi: 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.' In his own life he had discovered the constant presence of Jesus. Even when everyone had forsaken him, Paul did not feel alone. Jesus stayed close by. It was he who gave Paul security and urged him to go on, to face every hardship.

Paul's secret could be ours too. I can do all things when I too recognize and welcome in my pain the mysterious closeness of Jesus who almost identifies himself with my suffering, taking it upon himself. I can do all things when I live in a communion of love with others, because He comes into our midst, just as he promised (see Mt 18:20), and I am supported by the strength of unity. I can do all things when I welcome and put into practice the words of the Gospel; they make me perceive the road I am called to follow day by day, teaching me how to live and giving me confidence.

I will have the strength to face not only my personal trials, or those of my family, but also those of the world around me. So appalling are the problems of society and the nations, this could seem naïve, something utopic, and yet it is true that 'all things' are possible for us with the presence of the Omnipotent – 'all things' but only the things that are the good which God, in his merciful love, has decided for me and for others by means of me. And if these things do not come about immediately, we can carry on believing and hoping in his plan of love that spans eternity and will be fulfilled whatever.

All we have to do is work in 'partnership', as Chiara Lubich taught when imagining the thoughts of someone facing difficulties: '*I can do nothing for that dear person who is sick or in danger, or for that complicated situation. Well then, I will do what God wants of me in this moment: study well, sweep well, pray well, take care of my children well. And God will see to the untangling of this knot, comforting the one who is suffering, sorting out that unexpected event.*' This is working in a partnership of perfect communion, which demands from us great faith in God's love for his children and which makes it possible, through our action, for God himself to have trust in us. This mutual confidence works miracles. We will see that what we could not do, another has truly done, and has done far better than us.<sup>1</sup>

*Fabio Ciardi*

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<sup>1</sup> Chiara Lubich, *Yes Yes No No* (London: New City, 1977), pp. 113-14 (translation revised).

## **Facing difficulty with a new heart**

For some years we have been in a very hard economic situation. My husband and I had taken on commitments that we thought we could manage, but things became difficult. His job was “secure”, so we built the house we are now living in and the studio where he works. To do so we took out a loan from the bank. We were sure we could cope with the situation, but it worked out differently, and the time came when the bank advised us we were in arrears. The notification came to me like a death blow, and I accused my husband of mismanaging our finances.

I knew it was not the right way to face matters, so the next day I tried to begin again to love him with a new heart. The need of our four children, along with the foreseen and unforeseen expenses that come day by day, put my faith to a hard test. At the end of the year there still many debts, including our bank loan for the house. I had intended paying it with my end-of-year bonus, but my husband needed that money for other expenses.

The day the bank loan was due I went to church and prayed for a stronger faith in God and in his love. After returning home, there was a knock at the door. It was the mailman bringing me a letter that contained a check for a good sum of money: payment for a job my husband had done the previous summer. We no longer doubted that God loves us immensely and looks after all our needs.

Our economic problems are still not fully solved, but we have learned that to go ahead we have to remain firmly rooted in God, believe confidently in his providence and above all maintain unity between us.

*N.H.*