

For nothing will be impossible with God (Lk 1:37)

This phrase is found in the story of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel appears to Mary in her home in Nazareth and tells her God's plan for her life. She will conceive and bear a son and name him "Jesus" and "he will be called the Son of the Most High."¹ This episode is connected with other events in the Old Testament in which women who were sterile or very old miraculously gave birth to a son who would carry out an important role in the history of salvation. To fully and freely accept this mission to become the mother of the Messiah, Mary asks how this can happen, since she is a virgin. Gabriel gives her the guarantee that it would not be the work of a man, but rather of God. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."² And he adds: "For nothing will be impossible with God."³

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With these words, Gabriel reassured her that anything God declared or promised would be fulfilled – because nothing is impossible for him. The English translation of this verse says, "nothing is impossible *with* God" because the Greek word has the meaning of "with, or nearby, or together with God" and so it underlines God's closeness to human beings. Therefore, when a man or a woman are "together with God" and freely accept his will, nothing is impossible.

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How can we put into practice this Word of Life? Above all, by believing and having great trust that God can act within us, beyond all our limitations and weaknesses, even in the darkest moments of our life.

This was the experience of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he was imprisoned and eventually put to death. He wrote: "We must continuously immerse ourselves into living, speaking, behaving, suffering, and dying with Jesus so that we can recognize what God promises and brings it to fulfillment. What *is* certain (...) is 'impossible' doesn't exist for God. (...) What *is* certain is that while not expecting anything, we can ask for everything. What *is* certain is that in suffering our joy is hidden and in death is our life ... God said 'yes' and 'amen' to all of this in Christ. This 'yes' and this 'amen' are the solid ground on which we stand".⁴

1. Lk 1:32.

2. *Ibid*, 35.

3. *Ibid*, 37.

4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a German Lutheran theologian and pastor, protagonist in the resistance against Nazism. Quote is from *Resistenza e resa*, San Paolo Press, Cinisello Balsamo 1988, p. 474.

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In the attempt to overcome what is apparently “impossible” because of our inadequacy and to reach what is “possible” for us as believers, one determining fact is the communitarian dimension. This is what comes into play when, as disciples, we live the New Commandment of Jesus, (...) “Love one another. (...) This is how all will know you are my disciples: your love for one another,” (Jn 13:34-35) allowing Jesus to dwell both within us as individuals as well as in the community. This is when we experience the power of the Risen Lord among us.

In 1948, Chiara Lubich wrote to a group of young priests: “Let’s keep going! But not with our own strength, since we are weak and miserable, but rather with the omnipotence of unity. I have experienced, I have touched with my hand that God, dwelling among us, accomplishes the impossible – he makes miracles happen! If we remain faithful to our task, (...) the world will see unity accomplished and with it, the fullness of the kingdom of God.”⁵

Chiara continued, “Years ago, when I visited Africa, I often met young people who wanted to live the Christian life, and yet they told me about all the difficulties they were encountering every day. They found it very hard to stay faithful to their religion and follow the teachings of the Gospel. We would talk for hours, and in the end, we always reached the same conclusion: On our own, it’s impossible, but together, we can do it! Jesus himself guaranteed it when he promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name [in my love], I am there among them.’ (Mt 18:20) And with him everything is possible.”

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5. Chiara Lubich, *Letters of the Early Times*. New City Press, New York.

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