



There are words that resound in the history of the Church like the tolling of eternal truth. One of them is **“Non possumus”**—in Latin, “we cannot.” It is not a simple gesture of obstinacy, nor the whim of those who resist giving in. It is a **profession of faith** that has traversed centuries, always pronounced when the Church has been forced to choose between fidelity to Christ and submission to human powers.

Today, in the midst of a world that constantly invites us to relativize, negotiate the essentials, or “adapt” the faith in order to fit better into society, this expression remains as necessary as in the days of the first Christians.

1. Origin and Historical Meaning of “Non possumus”

The phrase takes root in the **era of Roman persecutions**. When Christians were asked to burn incense to idols or at least accept pagan customs, many responded:

“Non possumus” – We cannot (do this), because we cannot stop being what we are: disciples of Christ.

It was not a political refusal but a **theological** one. They knew that “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Over time, this expression reappeared in different moments of history:

- **In times of heresies**, when some proposed to water down or distort doctrine, the faithful repeated that they could not give in regarding the deposit of faith.
- **During tensions with civil powers**, kings and governments tried to manipulate the Church. Bishops and Popes responded with the same spirit: “Non possumus.”
- **In the 20th century**, Pope Pius XII used these words when faced with pressure from totalitarian regimes that sought to subject the Church to State control.

In all these situations, **“we cannot” did not mean weakness, but strength of fidelity**: the certainty that the truth of Christ cannot be negotiated.



2. The Deeper Theological Meaning

To say “**Non possumus**” is to affirm:

- That **there are non-negotiable truths**, because they come directly from God.
- That the **Church is not the owner of the faith**, but its faithful custodian.
- That Christians **cannot renounce the Cross**, even if the world considers it a scandal or folly (cf. 1 Cor 1:23).

In other words: **it is not about what we “want” or “prefer,” but about what has been commanded to us by Christ.**

Jesus Himself said:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mt 24:35).

Faced with this certainty, any attempt to change, dilute, or manipulate the Gospel must receive the same firm response: **Non possumus.**

3. The Relevance of “Non possumus” Today

Today, no one asks us to burn incense to Roman gods, but there are new idols:

- **Moral relativism**, which says everything is the same and nothing really matters.
- **Consumerism**, which makes money and pleasure absolute ends.
- **Political or cultural power**, which at times demands that we renounce truth in order to be accepted.

In this context, Christians face the same crossroads: **to be faithful to Christ or to surrender to the world.**



- When a Catholic is pressured to silence his or her faith at work, he must remember: *Non possumus*.
- When we are asked to accept practices contrary to Christian morality—whether in bioethics, in family, or in society—the response is the same: *Non possumus*.
- When there is an attempt to turn the liturgy into mere entertainment, forgetting that it is Holy Sacrifice, the Church must say: *Non possumus*.

This is not fanaticism. It is not intolerance. It is **coherence**. If we stop being faithful to Christ in what is essential, what is left of us?

4. Practical Guide: Living “Non possumus” Today

Saying “**Non possumus**” is not just for martyrs and bishops. You too, in your daily life, can live out this fidelity. Here is a guide from a theological and pastoral perspective:

a) In Personal Life

- **Pray every day**: the strength of “Non possumus” is born from union with God.
- **Examine your conscience**: recognize when you have given in out of fear or convenience.
- **Trust in grace**: you are not alone in the struggle, the Holy Spirit is your defender.

b) In the Family

- **Educate in the truth**: do not negotiate the faith in your children’s formation.
- **Defend Christian marriage**: faced with the trivialization of love, say with your witness: *Non possumus*.
- **Transmit devotion**: family prayer strengthens the home against the pressure of the world.

c) In Social and Professional Life

- **Always be honest**: even if others choose lies or corruption.
- **Bear witness with courage**: if they mock your faith, respond with peace, but do not hide it.
- **Do not participate in what offends God**: even if it is customary or legalized.



d) In Parish and Ecclesial Life

- **Love the liturgy:** participate with reverence, because here “Non possumus” means not trivializing the sacred.
- **Support your faithful pastors:** pray and help those who, like the Apostles, must say “we will obey God rather than men.”
- **Discern with fidelity:** not everything the world calls “progress” is compatible with the faith.

5. The Spiritual Fruit of “Non possumus”

When Christians say with their hearts “**Non possumus**”, something marvelous happens:

- We unite ourselves to the **chain of martyrs and confessors** of all times.
- We experience an **inner freedom** that no one can take away.
- We give the world a **luminous testimony** that Christ lives and reigns.

And even if we are sometimes marginalized or persecuted, let us remember the words of Jesus:

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (Jn 15:18).

Conclusion

“Non possumus” is not a “no” to the world, but a resounding “yes” to Christ. It is the fidelity that sustains the Church throughout all ages, the fidelity that gives us identity and protects us from dissolving into the sea of indifference.

In a time when everything seems negotiable, you and I are called to remain firm, with charity but also with clarity, saying:



Non possumus... because **Christ has entrusted it to us, and we cannot betray Him.**

□ Do you want to start living it today? Set yourself a simple resolution: identify one area of your life where you are giving in out of fear or convenience, and decide to say your own “Non possumus.” Do it calmly, but with courage. You will see how fidelity brings peace and joy, because “the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32).