



In the Cycle of Prayer of our Bishops' Conference May 1 is given as a Day to celebrate Human Work. The commemoration of St Joseph the Worker on 1 May was instituted by Pius XII in 1955. It proposes the example and intercession of Joseph as worker and provider. At this time of "lockdown" many may not be able to continue their usual work. Many are at their work as caring for those suffering from the Corona Virus, to support those who are worried. Others are working so that the rest of our society can function as well as is possible.

While we cannot come together for the Eucharist at the moment it is important for us to remember the words we say at the preparation of gifts, that the bread and the wine are 'work of our hands'.

To positively respond to the Communists "May Day" celebrations for the Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker in 1955. In doing so, he told the world that work is not unimportant and that each person works with God in creating something good. He communicated that working men and women have a Good Shepherd who walks with each person, that in Saint Joseph the Lord is a defender and a father, a man who values his work as a carpenter whom God chose to be the head of the Holy Family. Joseph's silent but has excellent hearing, and his intercession is very powerful over the Heart of the Savior. Remember he heard the God's call through the angel in the silence of sleep; the angel used dreams to communicate God's plan.

Pope Francis said, "we celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker. Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, reminds us of the **dignity and importance of labor**. Work is part of God's plan for the world; by responsibly cultivating the goods of creation, we grow in dignity as men and women made in God's image. For this reason, the problem of unemployment urgently demands greater social solidarity and wise and just policies. I also encourage the many young people present to look to the future with hope, and to invest themselves fully in their studies, their work and their relationships with others. Saint Joseph, as a model of quiet prayer and closeness to Jesus, also invites us to think about the time we devote to prayer each day."

[1 May 2013]

In our prayers we could think about

- all who work in the NHS, care homes, the medical profession, and medical research
- all who work in any way to serve society: shops, transport, the utilities
- that all who work may they earn a just wage and be treated with dignity
- for all training others in skills to use in productive work
- for the stewardship of the earth's resources, so that all may benefit for generations to come
- for all who are seeking work
- for all who cannot work

In the Roman Missal as well as the texts for May 1, you could consider these mass texts:

- For the Blessing of Man's Labour
- For Productive Land

It is also worthwhile studying the Bishops' Conference document on 'The Spirituality of Work

Preface for the feast day in the Ambrosian Rite

In your providence you chose Saint Joseph
to be the guardian of your incarnate Son,
to bring him up with a father's love
and to be for your people a saving example, a model and industrious craftsman.
Though born of David's royal line
he earned his bread in the sweat of his brow,
gracing his labours with holiness in the company of Jesus and Mary.
To his trade he gave such nobility of spirit
that your only Son our Lord was not ashamed
to be called the Carpenter's son.

[A Griffiths *We Give You Thanks and Praise* Canterbury Oress 1999]

From the Mass for the feast day in the Roman Rite

Collect

O God, Creator of all things,
who laid down for the human race the law of work,
graciously grant that by the example of Saint Joseph and under his patronage
we may complete the works you set us to do and attain the rewards you promise.

Gospel - Matthew 13:54-58

Coming to his home town, Jesus taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, 'Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?' And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country and in his own house', and he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

WORK AS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE – Pope John Paul II – *Redemptoris Custos* - 1989

22. Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). This "submission" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of his presumed father, he was known as "the carpenter's son." If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families, in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. In our own day, the Church has emphasized this by instituting the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1. Human work, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work too has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation, and has also been redeemed in a special way. At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption.

23. In the human growth of Jesus "in wisdom, age and grace," the virtue of industriousness played a notable role, since "work is a human good" which "transforms nature" and makes man "in a sense, more human."

The importance of work in human life demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to "help all people to come closer to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world, and to deepen...friendship with Christ in their lives, by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King."

24. What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies;...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things-it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic."