

## **One**

### **Today is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker**

After God creates Adam, He makes a garden for the man and places him in it. It's a garden that has everything Adam could ever want, except for Eve and she shows up soon afterwards. But when God gives Adam the garden, He isn't just giving him something to satisfy his physical needs. He's also giving Adam a mission. He's giving him something important to *do*.

Genesis says that, "God settled the man in the Garden of Eden to *cultivate it and care for it*."

This is one of God's greatest and earliest gifts to the human race. It is the gift of *meaningful work*.

## **Two**

### **Work is a Participation in God's Creative Activity**

It's often pointed out that God entrusts Adam with work before the fall, before our first parents committed the sin. Because meaningful work is not, in itself, a curse or a punishment. It's a joy. And it's a joy precisely because it's one of the ways that we live out our call to be children of God.

One of the greatest joys young children have is to help their dad and mom with their work, their projects. It brings children and parents together when the children feel like they're really contributing. And God, Our Father, has given us this joy to help Him in His work.

St. John Paul II, in his great encyclical on human work, says that this is the fundamental meaning of human work: it's a chance to participate in God's creative activity.

Genesis talks about God "working" those first six days to make a good world but when He tells Adam to cultivate the garden and care for it, He's giving Adam the opportunity to work alongside Him in perfecting creation, in making the world a better place.

St. Paul calls us "co-workers" with God. That's an incredible title. God could have just done everything in creation by Himself. But He invites His children to work with Him. Because to do so is a great joy and connects us more closely to Him.

What a Good Father God is!

### **Three**

#### **By our work we do good for others and make the world a better place**

When we talk about "making the world a better place," that has to mean first and foremost making the world a better place for people. It has to mean that we are serving God's children somehow through our work. So we answer the question, "how does our work make the world a better place?" by answering the question, "whom does our work serve?"

Our work should serve our customers and clients. It should serve our bosses. It should serve our students or our teachers. It should serve our kids and our spouses. It should serve society as a whole. If people would be better off without our work, and it's hard to see how our work makes the world a better place, then we need to find new work, work that is good for others.

Work perfects you as a person. Work causes you to gain virtues you wouldn't get without work.

So often I think, "Oh, if I would have only known then what I know now."

But that is impossible. The only way I know now what I didn't know then, was by working – working through trial and error, with successes and failures, by interacting with people, through good times and bad, through conflict and joy, through seeing an arduous task through to the end, through perseverance and patience.

We can all say we have learned a great deal and become who we are partly through our work in the home and outside of it. And hopefully, we have grown to become more excellent humans by our work.

Do you see? Work is one of the most important means to develop the virtues we need to become the person we are supposed to be forever. But we can't develop those virtues and characteristics without engaging in work.

So even if you are retired from your paid job and your kids are grown, you need to work. You need to do good for others and good for the world inside the home and outside of it – every day

We should work in some form until we are dead. Like the Knights of Malta who accompany the sick to Lourdes or Grandparents who care for the physical and spiritual needs of grandkids or spiritual mentors.

That is why we need the gift of work until we are dead so that we can continue to participate in God's creative activity, do good for others, and grow in virtue.

## **Four**

### **Work as “Toil”**

Now it is true that after Adam and Eve sinned, God warned that Adam’s work would take on the character of toil. Work becomes tedious, difficult, stressful, and uncertain. Finding good work, meaningful work, becomes a real challenge. But these unpleasant, negative aspects of our work don’t eliminate any of the goods that work offers.

Work is still a participation in God’s creative activity. It’s still supposed to be a service to others. It can still be a perfection of the worker himself. Now it’s painful, yes. But that pain and irritation can be put to good work in counteracting our vices. Vices like pride, self-sufficiency, laziness, impatience, and self-indulgence/

More than that, since we are Christians, and we believe that when united to Christ our suffering has the capacity to help save souls, the aggravation we get from work can become one more contribution to the world.

When we do meaningful work, we participate in God’s creative activity, we help Him save souls. And when we suffer at work, we can participate in God’s redemptive activity.

The toil aspect of work, far from taking away from work’s value, can – from a Christian perspective – actually enhance the value of work. It can help save our souls and the souls of other people.

## **Five**

### **Resolve to remember the good of your work**

So before you go to bed tonight, write down how your work serves God and makes the world a better place. Write down how your work serves the people around you, how your work is good for society, and how your work makes you a better person. It may take some thinking to figure out exactly how your work does those things, but it's worth thinking about. Because we're supposed to spend our time not just earning money, but doing good for God and neighbor. And our work, whether at home or at the office, is one of the primary ways we do that.

So write down how you are doing good at work. And then, when your job becomes unpleasant and frustrating, take out what you've written, look at it, and thank God for His gift of work.