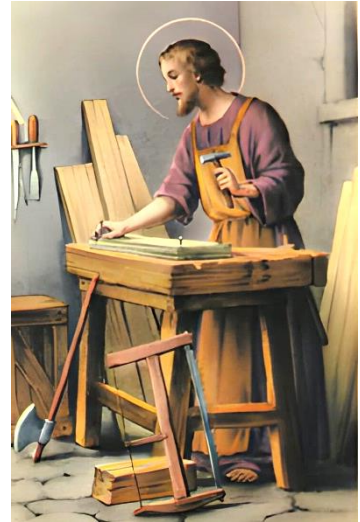


St. Joseph, Model of the Great Dignity of Work by Which We Share in God's Creative Will!

The dictionary defines work as any activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result, a task or something one has to do. Since we are not merely material beings, but are spiritual as well, made in God's image, we must see all that we do in light of that spiritual dimension, and that gives what we do great value and great dignity as an extension of the creative hand of God Himself.



THROUGH WORK man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family. And work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself. Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God Himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work. *Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish* man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus, work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature.

(St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem Xercens*, Blessing and Introduction.)

From the beginning of creation, humankind has been given the great responsibility to subdue the earth and to be stewards over it for the welfare of all. In this we mirror the providence and creative power of God, the Divine Family, Who brought all the earth and all of us into existence in a community that is essentially bound together in dignity and grace to one another as the human family, and most importantly, to God Himself, for neither the earth nor we can exist without Him. The human family must mirror the Divine Family in its operation and care for one another and for the earth. While the Divine creates from nothing, mankind is called to use creation to create new things for his enjoyment and the sustenance and advancement of humankind. Seen in the vision of God, this gives everything any human creature does a dignity beyond temporal or human measure. And as the Church, we are held responsible to keep a right order in all things subjugated to the authority of the Creator, the Father of Love. The social doctrine of the Church is clear on these matters lest the dignity and rights of the worker, of every human being, are ignored or violated.

Each of us has some mission, some task on earth that God has called us to specifically as a unique individual, some glory to return to Him that no one else can. He

has given us certain talents for a certain purpose. This is our vocation in life. For St. Joseph it is clear. His work, his vocation was to be the Virgin-Father of Jesus and the Virgin-Spouse of Mary, father to the Redeemer of mankind and husband to the Mother of the Redeemer. He was called to be the guardian and custodian of God's two most precious treasures, His beloved Son and the Mother of the Son. What could be more noble or exalted?

St. Peter Julian Eymard in the *Month of St. Joseph* spoke similarly to what St. Joseph told Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil about being a co-redemptor with Jesus and Mary in Christ's bitter passion and crucifixion. How St. Joseph's love for them was crucified with theirs. Being one with Mary in a perfect virginal marriage, Joseph must have desired to be one with her at this exceptional time as well, if it be God's will. Together they accepted the Divine Will that their Son be the Lamb of God on Calvary. **"In this way, he was participating in her act of co-redemption not explicitly but implicitly, not physically but volitionally, "in pectore" drinking his share of the chalice of the Lord's passion in union with Mary and thus earning for himself the title of co-redeemer with Mary on Calvary."** This was the vocation, the preordained work, the glory St. Joseph alone could render to God.

"It is true, my daughter, that immediately after my conception, I was, through the future merits of Jesus and because of my exceptional role of future Virgin-Father, cleansed from the stain of original sin. I was from that moment confirmed in grace and never had the slightest stain on my soul. This is my unique privilege among men. My pure heart also was from the first moment of existence inflamed with love for God. Immediately, at the moment when my soul was cleansed from original sin, grace was infused into it in such abundance that, excluding my holy spouse, I surpassed the holiness of the highest angel in the angelic choir."

"My heart suffered with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Mine was a silent suffering, for it was my special vocation to hide and shield, as long as God willed, the Virgin Mother and Son from the malice and hatred of men. The most painful of my sorrows was that I knew beforehand of their passion yet would not be there to console them. Their future suffering was ever present to me and became my daily cross. I became, in union with my holy spouse, co-redemptor of the human race. Through compassion for the sufferings of Jesus and Mary I co-operated, as no other, in the salvation of the world."

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, The Diary OUR LADY OF AMERICA, Pg. 13.)

Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son but was spared the actual sacrifice and yet merited the title "Father of Nations." St. Joseph was not only willing to sacrifice his only Son but actually did so and thus merited a universal spiritual fatherhood over all mankind, even as his spouse Mary, the new Eve, became "mother of all the living." (Gen: 3:20.) On December 8, 1870, feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pope St. Pius IX who had declared the Immaculate Conception of Mary a dogma of the Church, issued the decree **Quemadmodum Deus**, giving St. Joseph the official title of "Patron of the Universal Church." The word "patron" is derived from the word "pater," which is "father." The Patriarch Joseph of the Old Testament, who saved the pharaoh and the people of Egypt from starvation through obedience to the divine wisdom revealed in dreams, was given the title of "Savior of the World." In his encyclical **Quamquam Pluries**, Pope Leo XIII addresses the Patriarch Joseph's charge over all the empire of the pharaoh as the

prototype of St. Joseph's charge over Christ's empire, the universal Church, meriting for St. Joseph a seat in glory to the left of Christ in His kingdom while Mary, the Queen-Mother, sits at His right hand in the kingdom of Heaven.

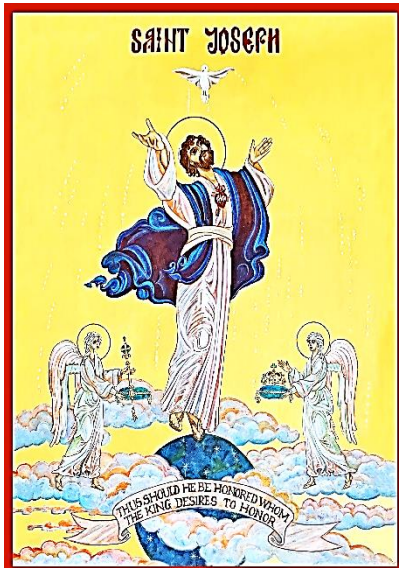
In *Redemptoris Custos* St. John Paul II clearly states that St. Joseph was "partaking' in the plan of salvation". As the first Adam and Eve separated humankind from God and were the sources of the desacralization of creation, Joseph and Mary began its resanctification and restoration to God. St. Joseph served the person and mission of Jesus directly by his fatherhood and was thus truly a minister of our salvation, for his life was a service and sacrifice to the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. The Messiah grew up in his house and under his authority. With God there are no accidents; nothing is left to chance, but all is preannounced and preordained according to the Father's will for our salvation and union with Him.

Mary is the Lord's humble servant, prepared from eternity for the task of being the Mother of God. Joseph is the one whom God chose to be the "overseer of the Lord's birth," the one who has the responsibility to look after the Son of God's "ordained" entry into the world, in accordance with divine dispositions and human laws. All of the so-called "private" or "hidden" life of Jesus is entrusted to Joseph's guardianship.

"By his dutiful paternal participation in the life of his Son and moral participation in his sacrifice, St. Joseph fulfilled his vocation and mission for which he was granted so exalted an eternal recognition and position, body and soul, nearest the King and Queen in heaven.

Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil described her vision of the glorious St. Joseph on his feast March 19, 1958.

Then suddenly, as he ceased speaking, I was favored with a unique and marvelous vision of the glorious St. Joseph. He seemed, as it were, a short distance above what had the appearance of a large globe with clouds moving about it. His head was slightly raised, the eyes gazing upward as if in ecstasy. The hands were in a position similar to that of the priest during the celebration of Holy Mass, only they extended upward somewhat more. The color of his hair as also of his rather small and slightly forked beard seemed a very dark brown. His eyes resembled in color the hair and beard. He was clothed in a white robe that reached to his ankles. Over this he wore a sort of cloak which did not come together at the throat but covering the shoulders and draped gracefully over each arm, reached to the hem of the robe. The cloak at times had, or seemed to have, the appearance of a brown, sometimes a purple hue, or perhaps a slight blending of the two. The belt about his waist was of a gold color, as were his sandals. His appearance, though quite youthful, gave at the same time the impression of rare maturity combined with great strength. He seemed a bit taller than medium height. The lines of his face appeared strong and purposeful, softened somewhat by a gentle serenity. I also saw his most pure heart at this time. Moreover, I saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering over his head. Standing sideways, facing each other, were two angels, one on the right, the other on the left. Each carried what



appeared to be a small pillow in a satin covering, the pillow on the right bearing a gold crown, the one on the left, a gold scepter. The angels were all white, even their faces and hair. It was a beautiful whiteness that reminded me of the stainlessness of heaven. Then I heard

these words: Thus should he be honored whom the King desires to honor.” (Diary, Pgs. 29-30.)

With St. Joseph, let us pray that we might know and fulfill the vocation in life that God ordained for each of us and be as faithful to it as St. Joseph was to his.

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII for St. Joseph’s Protection

To you, O Blessed Joseph, we have recourse in our affliction, and having implored the help of your most holy spouse, we now, with hearts filled with confidence, earnestly beg you to take us under your protection. Through that sacred bond of charity which united you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by that fatherly love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you to look graciously upon the beloved inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by his blood, and to aid us in our necessities with your power and strength.

Defend, O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen children of Jesus Christ. Keep from us, O most loving father, all blight of error and corruption. Aid us from on high, most valiant defender, in this conflict with the powers of darkness. And just as you once saved the Child Jesus from mortal danger, so now defend God’s Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity. Shield us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and strengthened by your help, we may be able to live a virtuous life, die a happy death, and obtain everlasting bliss in heaven. Amen.

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