

The School of Saint Joseph for Leaders
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(2) WHY IS SAINT JOSEPH THE PATRON SAINT OF WORKERS

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The Church invites us to turn to Saint Joseph to be inspired in our work.

This is what Pious XII did in a solemn manner, by instituting the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker (the Artisan).

Some schools of thought had attacked the Church in an attempt to keep workers away from it, claiming that it is "against the workers", spreading false ideas about man and the world, about history, about the structure of society and the economy. In fact, if we look at the modern era, we see that already in 1892 Leo XIII showed his closeness to the world of work by not hesitating to intervene on social issues; thus, he published *Rerum Novarum*, the first response of the Church to the great social question¹.

This corresponds to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, which show how the world of work is not far from the Lord, because God is presented therein as the One who first "works". In the beginning of the Bible, the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, show us God creating the world².

In becoming man, the Lord chose the family of Saint Joseph, a man who works to earn what he needs to live. Thus, the Lord Jesus showed all the value and dignity of work, to the point of being known as "the carpenter's son" (Mt. 13, 55), and to work Himself in the workshop of Saint Joseph until He was thirty years old.

The Lord Jesus, in bringing salvation to all men and to the whole of mankind, came to redeem also the work, so that it does not remain tainted by the condemnation generated by sin³, but becomes a way to holiness.

Wouldn't we like to be able to spend some time in Saint Joseph's workshop and learn from him and from Jesus the secrets of a true work done "by the book", for the glory of God?

Let's try, then, to tiptoe into Saint Joseph's workshop, let's stand in a corner and contemplate the two perspectives.

1°) The first perspective in the workshop of Nazareth: THE LORD JESUS OBSERVES SAINT JOSEPH

¹ PONTIFICAL COUNSEL "JUSTICE and PEACE" *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 89

² *Gen* 1,1- 2,24

³ *Gen* 3,17-19

**** Jesus watched Saint Joseph work and learned how to work.**

Jesus did on earth, towards Saint Joseph, the same thing he has always done towards the Father, as John 5:19 tells us: «The Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his Father doing ; for what he does, his Son will do also».

Let us contemplate the Child Jesus as he watches, fascinated, his earthly father take the wood, measure it, cut it, plane it, carve it with the chisel, shape it, assemble it with other pieces of wood, file it down to sand down the rough edges and come up with "a well-made and beautiful work". Jesus looked to his earthly father to discover the "secrets" of the craft.

The adolescent Jesus really learned from Saint Joseph

- what it means to work;
- how to work well, with a taste for realizing well-made and beautiful objects, made "by the book";
- the purpose of rendering a service to those for whom he worked.

The Gospel according to Luke tells us that Jesus "came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and as he was accustomed, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day" (Lk 4:16).

On Saturday, like every "righteous man," Joseph did not work but sanctified the Lord's Day by resting and going to the Synagogue with his son Jesus, according to the commandment of the Book of Deuteronomy:

« Take care to keep holy the sabbath day as the LORD, your God, commanded you. Six days you may labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God. No work may be done then, whether by you, or your son.... » (Dt.5, 12-14)

In Joseph, Jesus saw concretely what fidelity to God is in work and in the weekly rest ; he learned to remember, every Saturday, that life does not come from man's work but from God.

**** The Church looks at Saint Joseph and sees that he cooperated in an eminent way in the mission of Salvation of her Divine Son.**

After Mary, Saint Joseph collaborated in the most perfect way in the work of Redemption of the Lord Jesus. How did he do this? Did he found new communities? No. Did he write a Gospel? No. Did he perform miracles? No. "Just" ("just" so to speak), just **by his work!**

Every workday, every effort, every hard-earned penny was for the Son, for the Son's growth in age and wisdom, to prepare him for His mission as Savior.

2°) The second perspective in the workshop of Nazareth: SAINT JOSEPH OBSERVES JESUS

From our discreet corner in the workshop of Nazareth, we realize that there is not only the look of Jesus on Saint Joseph, but that there is also another perspective: the look of Saint Joseph on Jesus!

Let us be like Saint Joseph who, while working, kept his gaze on Jesus.

Joseph found the deep meaning of his work by keeping his eyes on Jesus.

Joseph worked for Jesus.

Joseph worked for this son who had been given to him by Heaven and to whom he had to impose the « name from Heaven ».

We too, while we work, « keep our eyes on Jesus », present beside us, watching us work.

What does he think of our work?

How does Jesus judge our way of working? Does he approve of it? Does he disapprove of it? Would he have reason to praise us by saying: well, you are « a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation. » (2 Tim 2:15)?

Let us ask Saint Joseph to teach us to direct all our work towards God:

- to sanctify ourselves, by fulfilling the divine vocation that gives glory to the One who calls us;
- to sanctify our work, by carrying out our tasks with Jesus, under his gaze, with love;
- to sanctify others, when we offer them work well done, with honest intentions and good quality, with all our professionalism;
- to achieve concrete goods, thus contributing to the common good, which is greatly needed.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE
WORKING IN SAINT JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP

I INVITE YOU, FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, TO DO A « SPIRITUAL EXERCISE », TO « WORK IN THE WORKSHOP OF SAINT JOSEPH ».

The first week, let us work « under the gaze of Jesus », let us work with Jesus who watches us, let us work as Jesus would want us to.

The second week, let us work « looking at Jesus » at our side, talking with Jesus, entrusting our work to Him, let us work for Him, for His glory.

CONCLUSION

By working with our eyes fixed on Saint Joseph, patron saint of workers, we can benefit from his intercession and protection, and have him as the model of an honest and holy worker.

Let us pray that we may come to live work as a service in which we are « faithful in small matters » and thus be able one day to hear the Lord say to us what He said to Saint Joseph as He welcomed him into Heaven: « Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy. » (Mt 25:23)

Saint Joseph the Worker, pray for us!