

## PREFACE

In chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel, Jesus relates the parable of the talents. The master, before he leaves on a journey, entrusts his possessions to three stewards.

To one he gave five talents: to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

When the master returns from his journey to find that the first two stewards doubled what he had given them, he was pleased and gave them even more responsibilities and even more talents. These two stewards, the good stewards were productive with their gifts. As for the steward who buried his talent, the master fired him.

Questions that arise from this parable are: "Who are the good stewards of today?" "Whose productive work today qualifies them as good stewards?" "How are people to use their talents and resources to receive favor from the Master?" This book will employ the papal social tradition to help determine the nature of the good steward and ways of becoming a good steward in today's contemporary work life.

As many people have noted, the Christian view of work is never dualistic. One's work life does not escape the gospel values articulated in Scripture as well as the tradition. Work, from a Christian vantage point, is never only an economic activity. The good stewards therefore are those who work and invest their talents, not those who remain passive and idle. The good stewards are those who bring their faith to bear in their work lives. The social teaching of the Church must not remain buried in the thoughts of academicians. It must be implemented in the organizations of society. Throughout the last hundred years the popes have maintained that work is of fundamental significance in one's moral and spiritual life. This book explores the nature of this significance and suggests ways to implement it.

To determine the nature of the good steward, this book attempts to answer three questions: 1) What is work? 2) What is the Catholic understanding of work? 3) What are some of the practical applications of a Catholic understanding of work? Chapter One provides a general sketch of three visions of work as job, career, or vocation. Work seen as a vocation is most preferable and certainly the most Christian of the three views. But how does one bridge the theory of vocation with the practice of organizational life? I believe three steps are necessary to bridge this gap between theory and practice. First, one must offer a definition of work which would find acceptance in both theological and organizational circles. For this I rely on a descriptive account of work (Chapter One). Work is a formative activity that changes both the "subject" who performs the work as well as the object that the work is directed towards. From these changes I derive four organizational

dimensions of work: formation of the worker, remuneration, production process, and product produced. Next, a moral and theological understanding of this descriptive account of work (the largest section of the book). Chapter Two examines the roots of the Catholic social tradition found in Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII in light of the four organizational dimensions. Chapter Three furthers this moral examination of work through an analysis of John XXIII's *Mater et magistra*. Chapter Four examines John Paul II's vision of work in *Laborem exercens*. The final step is to integrate the practice of organizational programs with the theory of papal social thought (Chapter Five). Chapter Five examines various concrete work programs such as gainsharing, quality circles, work-teams, and employee stock ownership plans in light of the moral principles and virtues of the papal tradition.

This book is written for the generalist. It is written for those people, especially Catholics, who want a better understanding of work and the role their faith lives has in their work. There is no need for theological or organizational expertise to understand the contents of this book. Jargon is kept to a minimum, and where uncommon language or specific terms are used, definitions are provided. The book is directed to those people who desire to attain a better understanding of work and the workplace from a Christian perspective. This text is best suited to be used in a course that examines organizational issues in light of the principles and virtues of the Catholic social tradition. While many of the examples and issues discussed in this book are taken from business life, the concepts in this book are applicable to most organizations, whether academic, medical, ecclesiastical, or governmental.

Michael Naughton  
Departments of Theology and Management  
University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, Minnesota