

THE DIGNITY OF WORK

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67. THE CROSS IS ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING HUMAN WORK¹

Gospel of Work, Human Rights/Dignity.

The new cross that sprang up not far from the ancient relic of the holy cross in the Cistercian Abbey proclaimed the birth of the new church. This birth is deeply engraved on my heart and, when I left the See of St. Stanislaus for the See of St. Peter, I took it with me as a new relic, a priceless relic of our time.

The new cross appeared when the land of the old countryside near Krakow that became the site of Nowa Huta saw the arrival of new men to begin new work. People did hard work here before that. They worked in the fields. The land was fertile and so they worked with pleasure. Some decades back industry began, great industry, heavy industry. People arrived here, coming from various places; they came to expend their energy here as workers in the iron industry.

It was they who brought with them the new cross. It was they who raised it as a sign of their will to build a new church. This very cross before which we are now standing. It was my good fortune, as your archbishop and cardinal, to bless and consecrate in 1977 this church that was born from the new cross.

The Mystery of the Cross Is Engraved on Human Work

This church was born from the new work. I would make bold to say that it was born from Nowa Huta. For we all know that man's work has deeply engraved on it the mystery of the cross, the law of the cross. In it comes true what the creator said after the fall of man: "By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat."² Both the old work in the fields, which makes wheat grow, but also thorns and thistles, and the new work in the blast furnaces and the new foundries are always carried out "with the sweat

¹ This material was delivered as an address on June 9, 1979 in Nowa Huta, Poland, to Catholics of Nowa Huta. This translation was taken from *Origins*, June 21, 1979, pp. 76-77.

² Gen 3:19.

of one's brow." The law of the cross is engraved on man's work. It was with the sweat of his brow that the farmer worked. It is with the sweat of his brow that the ironworker works. It is with the sweat of his brow—the terrible sweat of death—that Christ agonizes on the cross.

The cross cannot be separated from man's work. Christ cannot be separated from man's work. This has been confirmed here at Nowa Huta. This has been the start of the new evangelization at the beginning of the new millennium of Christianity in Poland. We have lived this new beginning together and I took it with me from Krakow to Rome as a relic. . . .

Human Dignity Is at the Foundation of an Understanding of Human Work

Christianity and the church have no fear of the world of work. They have no fear of the system based on work. The pope has no fear of men of work. They have always been particularly close to him. He has come from their midst. He has come from the quarries of Yakrzowek, from the Solvay furnaces in Borek Falecki, and from Nowa Huta. Through all these surroundings, through his own experience of work, I make bold to say that the pope learned the Gospel anew. He noticed and became convinced that the problems being raised today about human labor are deeply engraved in the Gospel, that they cannot be fully solved without the Gospel. The problems being raised today—and is it really only today?—about human labor do not, in fact, come down in the last analysis—I say this with respect for all the specialists—either to technology or even to economics but to a fundamental category: the category of the dignity of work, that is to say, of the dignity of man. Economics, technology, and the many other specializations and disciplines have their justification for existing in that single essential category. If they fail to draw from that category and are shaped without reference to the dignity of human labor, they are in error, they are harmful, they are against man.

This fundamental category is humanistic. I make bold to say that this fundamental category, the category of work as a measure of the dignity of man, is Christian. We find it in its highest degree of intensity in Christ.

The Cross Dignifies Work

Let this suffice, dear brothers. It was not on one occasion alone that I met you here as your bishop and dealt more abundantly with all these themes. Today, as your guest, I must speak of them more concisely but remember this one thing: Christ will never approve that man being considered, or of man considering himself, merely as a

means of production, or that he be appreciated, esteemed and valued in accordance with that principle. Christ will never approve of it. For that reason he had himself put on the cross, as if on the great threshold of man's spiritual history, to oppose any form of degradation of man, including degradation by work. Christ remains before our eyes on his cross, in order that each human being may be aware of the strength that he has given him: "He gave (them) power to become children of God."³

68.

WORK REQUIRES GRATITUDE, STEWARDSHIP, AND GENEROSITY⁴

Collaboration with God, Dominion over the Earth, Economic Laws and Profits, Environment, Spirituality, Universal Destination of Goods.

Here in the heartland of America, in the middle of the bountiful fields at harvest time, I come to celebrate the Eucharist. As I stand in your presence in this period of autumn harvest, those words which are repeated whenever people gather for the Eucharist seem to be so appropriate:

"Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer which earth has given and human hands have made."

As one who has always been close to nature, let me speak to you today about the land, the earth, and that "which earth has given and human hands have made."

The Land Is God's Gift and Man's Responsibility

The land is God's gift entrusted to people from the very beginning. It is God's gift, given by a loving Creator as a means of sustaining the life which he had created.

³ Jn 1:12.

⁴ This material was delivered as a homily on October 4, 1979 in Des Moines, Iowa, to 350,000 persons consisting mainly of American farm families. The text was taken from *Origins*, October 25, 1979, pp. 293-294.

CHAPTER IV: ADDRESSES TO GENERAL AND OTHER AUDIENCES

But the land is not only God's gift. It is also man's responsibility. Man, himself created from the dust of the earth,⁵ was made its master.⁶ In order to bring forth fruit, the land would depend upon the genius and skillfulness, the sweat and the toil of the people to whom God would entrust it.

Thus the food which would sustain life on earth is willed by God to be both that "which earth has given and human hands have made."

To all of you who are farmers and all who are associated with this agricultural life when he described God his Father as "the vinedresser."⁷ You cooperate with the Creator, the "vinedresser," in sustaining and nurturing life. You fulfill the command of God given at the very beginning: "Fill the earth and subdue it."⁸

Here in the heartland of America, the valleys and hills have been blanketed with grain, the herds and the flocks have multiplied many times over. By hard work you have become masters of the earth and you have subdued it. By reason of the abundant fruitfulness which modern agricultural advances have made possible, you support the lives of millions who themselves do not work on the land, but who live because of what you produce. Mindful of this, I make my own the words of my beloved predecessor Paul VI: "It is the dignity of those who work on the land and of all those engaged in different levels of research and action in the field of agricultural development which must be unceasingly proclaimed and promoted."⁹

What then are the attitudes that should pervade man's relationship to the land? As always we must look for the answer beginning with Jesus, for, as St. Paul says: "In your minds you must be the same as Jesus Christ."¹⁰

In the life of Jesus, we see a real closeness to the land. In his teaching, He referred to the "birds of the air,"¹¹ the "lilies of the field."¹² He talked about the

⁵ Gen 3:7.

⁶ Gen 1:26.

⁷ Jn 15:1.

⁸ Gen 1:28.

⁹ Address to the World Food Conference, Nov. 9, 1974, n. 4.

¹⁰ Phil 2:5.

¹¹ Mt 6:26.

farmer who went out to sow the seed.¹³ He referred to his heavenly Father as the “vinedresser,”¹⁴ and to himself as the “good shepherd.”¹⁵

This closeness to nature, this spontaneous awareness of creation as a gift from God, as well as the blessing of a close-knit family—characteristics of farm life in every age including our own—these were part of the life of Jesus. Therefore I invite you to let your attitudes always be the same as those of Christ Jesus.

Three attitudes in particular are appropriate for rural life.

Gratitude

In the first place: gratitude. Recall the first words of Jesus in the Gospel we have just heard, words of gratitude to his heavenly Father: “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise.” Let this be your attitude as well. Every day the farmer is reminded of how much depends upon God. From the heavens come the rain, the wind and the sunshine. They occur without the farmer’s command or control. The farmer prepares the soil, plants the seed and cultivates the crop. But God makes it grow. He alone is the source of life.

Even the natural disasters, such as hailstorms and drought, tornadoes or floods, remind the farmer of his dependence upon God. Surely it was this awareness that prompted the early pilgrims to America to establish the feast which you call Thanksgiving.

After every harvest, whatever it may have been that year, with humility and thankfulness the farmer makes his own the prayer of Jesus: “Father Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise.”

Stewardship

Second, the land must be conserved with care since it is intended to be fruitful for generation upon generation. You who live in the heartland of America have been

¹² Mt 7:17.

¹³ Mt 13:4ff.

¹⁴ Jn 15:1.

¹⁵ Jn 10:14.

entrusted with some of the earth's best land: the soil so rich in minerals, the climate so favorable for producing bountiful crops, with fresh water and unpolluted air available all around you. You are stewards of some of the most important resources God has given to the world. Therefore conserve the land well, so that your children's children and generations after them will inherit an even richer land than was entrusted to you.

But also remember what the heart of your vocation is. While it is true here that farming today provides an economic livelihood for the farmer, still it will always be more than an enterprise of profit-making. In farming, you cooperate with the Creator in the very sustenance of life on earth.

Generosity

In the third place, I want to speak about generosity, a generosity which arises from the fact that "God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all people so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity."¹⁶

You who are farmers today are stewards of a gift from God which was intended for the good of all humanity. You have the potential to provide food for the millions who have nothing to eat and thus help to rid the world of famine. To you I direct the same question asked by Paul VI five years ago: "If the potential of nature is immense, if that of the mystery of the human genius over the universe seems almost unlimited, what is it that is too often missing . . . except that generosity, that anxiety which is stimulated by the sight of the sufferings and the miseries of the poor, that deep conviction that the whole family suffers then one of its members is in distress?"¹⁷

Recall the time when Jesus saw the hungry crowd gathered on the hillside. What was his response? He did not content himself with expressing his compassion. He gave his disciples the command: "Give them something to eat yourselves."¹⁸

Did he not intend those same words for us today, for us who live at the closing of the 20th century, for us who have the means available to feed the hungry of the world? Let us respond generously to his command by sharing the fruit of our labor, by contributing to others the knowledge we have gained, by being the promoters of rural

¹⁶ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 69.

¹⁷ Address to the World Food Conference, Nov. 9, 1974, n. 9.

¹⁸ Mt 14:16.

development everywhere and by defending the right to work of the rural population, since every person has a right to useful employment.

Christ Satisfies the Deepest Hunger of Humanity

Farmers everywhere provide bread for all humanity, but it is Christ alone who is the bread of life. He alone satisfies the deepest hunger of humanity. As St. Augustine said: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”¹⁹

While we are mindful of the physical hunger of millions of our brothers and sisters on all continents, at this Eucharist we are reminded that the deepest hunger lies in the human soul. To all who acknowledge this hunger within them Jesus says: “come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you.”

My brothers and sisters in Christ: Let us listen to these words with all our heart. They are directed to every one of us. To all who till the soil, to all who benefit from the fruit of their labors, to every man and woman on earth, Jesus says: “Come to me . . . and I will refresh you.” Even if all the physical hunger of the world were satisfied, even if everyone who is hungry were fed by his or her own labor or by the generosity of theirs, the deepest hunger of man would still exist.

Bring Your Work to Christ

We are reminded in the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians: “All that matters is that one is created anew.” Only Christ can create one anew, and this new creation finds its beginning only in his cross and resurrection. In Christ alone all creation is restored to its proper order. Therefore, I say: Come, all of you, to Christ. He is the bread of life. Come to Christ and you will never be hungry again.

Bring with you to Christ the products of your hands, the fruit of the land, that “which earth has given and human hands have made.” At this altar these gifts will be transformed into the Eucharist of the Lord.

Bring with you your efforts to make fruitful the land, your labor and your weariness. At this altar, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, all human activity is sanctified, lifted up and fulfilled.

¹⁹ *Confessions* I, 1.

Bring with you the poor, the sick, the exiled, and the hungry; bring all who are weary and find life burdensome. At this altar they will be refreshed, for his yoke is easy and his burden light.

Above all, bring your families and dedicate them anew to Christ, so that they may continue to be the working, living and loving community where nature is revered, where burdens are shared and where the Lord is praised in gratitude.

69. OUR WORK SHOULD EXPRESS OUR FAITH AND GRATITUDE²⁰

Christian Witness/Mission, Service, Work and Prayer.

Today the Liturgy has us celebrate the commemoration of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome and therefore the first Cathedral of the Universal Church. Our spiritual meeting on this double occasion of “dedication” and “thanksgiving” lends itself to two reflections of fundamental importance. The first one regards the value of Christian faith. Your thanks to God, of course, springs from faith; and the first exhortation that I wish to address to you is precisely this: esteem your faith! Keep your faith firm! Today there is need of an enlightened, convinced, deep faith. It is necessary to be prepared to answer adequately the questions that modern society continually proposes, and perhaps even violently, in order never to succumb in the clash with the various and contrasting mentalities; it is necessary to update and develop one’s own religious culture. Therefore, especially in periods when work is comparatively calm, attend formative meetings in your parishes: meditate on the “Word of God,” particularly on feast days, in order to be really convinced “worshippers of God in spirit and truth,” as Jesus says to the Samaritan woman.²¹

²⁰ This material was delivered as a homily on November 9, 1980 in Rome, to Italian farmers. The text was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 17, 1980, pp. 3, 20.

²¹ Jn 4:19-24.

As St. Peter wrote to the first Christians, it is necessary to gather round Christ, the living stone, with full certainty and confidence, “and like living stones be ourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”. Your dignity and responsibility as Christians is immense! “You in fact—the Apostle continues—are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”²²

Gratitude

The second reflection concerns the attitude of thanksgiving that must distinguish the life of every person, of every Christian in particular. The words of the Psalmist must be ours, even in moments of distress and sorrow: “O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!”²³ In his letters St. Paul instilled this constant spirit of gratitude: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you;”²⁴ “Be filled with the Spirit. . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”²⁵ It is a “eucharistic” attitude, which gives you peace and serenity in toils, frees you from all selfish and individualistic attachment, makes you docile to the will of the Almighty, even in the most difficult moral requirements, opens you to solidarity and universal charity, makes you understand how absolutely necessary prayer is, and above all, Eucharistic life through the Holy Mass, the Act of Thanksgiving par excellence, in order to live and bear witness consistently to our own Christian faith. To give thanks means to believe, to love, to give! And with joy and generosity!

Love of Work

Here is the message I entrust to you on this Day of Thanksgiving: have faith! be grateful! “Always seek to do good to one another and to all!”²⁶ And love your land, love your work! This is the encouragement I wish to leave you last of all. Certainly,

²² 1 Pt 2:4-9.

²³ Ps 95:1-2.

²⁴ 1 Thess 5:18.

²⁵ Eph 5:18-20.

²⁶ 1 Thes 5:15.

all arts and trades are useful and valuable, and every word and occupation must be fairly evaluated, esteemed, and respected. But work in the fields is essential and we are all debtors to those who dedicate themselves to it. It calls for continuity, industriousness, appreciation and esteem for traditional values, acceptance of risk, love of labor, and a sense of responsibility. Continue to love the land; instill this love in the young people who form new families! And the whole of society must be sincerely grateful to you, for so many reasons!

70.

HUMAN WORK IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF GOD'S PLAN²⁷

Dominion over the Earth, Meaning of Work, Service, Spirituality, Work and Society, Work and the Worker.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”²⁸

These words begin the Gospel passage of today's Liturgy. The well-known parable of the workers in the vineyard contains many themes. Fundamental among them is the thought that it is God who calls man to work, and that this must serve the continual formation of the world according to the plan of God himself. Every kind of human work, every one of its variations, is understood in the gospel parable.

The parable, from its very beginning, contains man's calling to rediscover the meaning of his work, keeping in mind the salvific Plan of God.

²⁷ This material was delivered as a Sunday Angelus Message on September 20, 1981 at Castel Gandolfo, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 28, 1981, p. 2.

²⁸ Mt 20:1.

Work Gives Meaning To Human Life

What is human work?

We can give only a contracted answer to this question. It is above all a prerogative of the human person, an element of human completeness, which precisely helps man to be more man. Without work, he is unable not only to nourish himself, but also to fulfill himself or reach his true dimension. In the second place, and as a result, work is a necessity, a duty, that gives to the human being life, serenity, commitment, meaning. The apostle Paul, we recall, severely warns: “If anyone will not work, let him not eat.”²⁹ Therefore, each one is called to carry out an activity at whatever level it may be, while idleness and exploitation are condemned. Besides, work is a right, “It is the great and fundamental right of man,” as I said two years ago in Poland in Nowy Targ. So much so that it must be promoted and safeguarded by society even in the possible conflict with other rights. Under these conditions, work becomes even a service, so that man “grows in the measure in which he gives himself for others.”³⁰ And from this harmony not only the individual, but also, and I would say above all, society itself benefits.

These are only some thoughts on the subject of the nature of human work. We put them together here, referring to the call of the householder who always goes out to hire laborers for his vineyard, as the Gospel parable says. We recall that this parable at its very beginning contains the invitation for man—whatever kind of work he performs—to rediscover his ultimate meaning in the salvific plan of God. And we pray that the awareness of this meaning may grow and deepen in every man. In fact, according to the plan of God, through work we must not only subdue the earth, but also achieve salvation. Therefore there is connected with work not only the dimension of temporality, but also the dimension of eternity.

²⁹ 2 Thes 3:10.

³⁰ Address to farmers of Legazpi City, February 21, 1981.

71. WORK SHOULD UNITE AND STRENGTHEN THE FAMILY³¹

Christian Witness/Mission, Work and Family.

We have already touched upon the question of human work several times on the occasion of our Angelus prayer on Sundays. This perennial subject, as ancient as man, as ancient as divine Revelation in the history of man, has become a particularly relevant one for us, in the current year, in consideration of the ninetieth anniversary of the Encyclical *Rerum novarum*.

Work and the Family

Today we must turn our attention to that particular link that exists between human work and the life of the family.

In actual fact, from his very origins man has had recourse to work to dominate the earth and to guarantee his own subsistence and that of the family. The two aims are truly human, but the second one contains a particular evangelical content.

The family finds in work the support for its development and union, the central factor that conditions its life, qualifies it, gives it its rhythm, and constitutes an element of cohesion and stability.

Work, therefore, belongs to the sphere of what man loves, what he lives for, that is, it belongs to the sphere of love. As I said last year in France to the workers of St. Denis, “In the years when I too was a worker, I knew what value the home, the future of their children, the respect due to their wives, to their mothers, had for me and for these men who were at the same time fathers of families.”³²

³¹ This material was delivered as a Sunday Angelus Message on October 25, 1981 in Rome, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 2, 1981, p. 2.

³² May 31, 1980.

Work Should Strengthen Family Life

Work, therefore, cannot destroy the family. On the contrary, it must unite it and help to strengthen it. Let the family not become, because of work, a superficial meeting of human beings, a hotel used only for meals and rest!

It is indispensable, therefore, that “the rights of the family [be] deeply inscribed in the very foundation of every code of labor, which has its subject precisely man and not just production and profit.”

72.

WOMEN POSSESS A SPECIAL VOCATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETY³³

Common Good, Work and Family, Work and Women/Mothers.

The problem of juridical equality between man and woman must be solved by a social legislation which recognizes the equality of working men and working women and at the same time, as *Pacem in terris* states, protects the right of the latter “to conditions of work reconcilable with the requirements and with their duties as wives and mothers.”³⁴ It is necessary to construct a society in which women can attend to the upbringing of their children, who are the hope of future society.

The Church is sensitive to this point; and, as I said at the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops celebrated in October last, “the family must be able to live in a fitting manner even when the mother dedicates herself completely to it.” This does not mean the exclusion of woman from the world of work and social and public activity. On the

³³ This material was delivered as a Sunday Angelus Message on December 6, 1981 in Rome, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 14, 1981, p. 7.

³⁴ *Pacem in terris*, n. 10.

contrary, I repeat to all women: “Be present with your creativeness in the transformation of the society. . . . Bring your contribution, illuminated by your religious feeling, to all your leaders and also to the highest authorities!”³⁵

Personalistic Dimension of Work

In the encyclical *Laborem exercens* I have already had occasion to express myself clearly on this subject. But some themes of that document should be emphasized, and above all the personalistic dimension of work. In fact, “man’s work concerns not only the economy but also, and especially, personal values.”³⁶ “The whole labor process must be organized and adapted in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home, taking into account the individual’s age and sex.”³⁷ “The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role.”³⁸ In a society which wishes to be just and human, it is absolutely necessary that the spiritual and material requirements of the person should occupy the first place in the hierarchy of values. It is to be hoped, therefore, that while respecting the equality of rights to work of all, both men and women, it will be made possible for every mother, “without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalizing her as compared with other women, to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age.”³⁹

Vocation of Women to Society

The Church recognizes and praises the specific contribution, a necessary and irreplaceable one, that woman, particularly today, can and does make to the promotion of the common good in public order and in the area of work. Endowed by the Creator with an innate gift of her own, made up of deep sensitivity and a fine sense of practical matters and moderation, she is called, together with man, to contribute to the growth

³⁵ Address in Guadalajara, Mexico, January 10, 1979.

³⁶ *Laborem exercens*, n. 15.

³⁷ *Laborem exercens*, n. 19.

³⁸ *Laborem exercens*, n. 19.

³⁹ Address to the XIX National Congress of CIF, n. 2, December 7, 1979.

of a more just and more human society. Therefore I wish, today also, to invite every woman, with words of deep encouragement, to extend the exercise of her precious qualities from the sphere of private life to that of public and social life, and to do so with wise responsibility.⁴⁰

73.

ST. JOSEPH IS A MODEL OF DEDICATION TO CHRIST IN ONE'S WORK⁴¹

Dignity of Work, St. Joseph, Service.

“Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord. . . . you are serving the Lord Christ.”⁴²

St. Joseph Is a Model for All Workers

How can we fail to see in these words from today's liturgy the plan and synthesis of the whole existence of Saint Joseph, whose testimony of noble dedication to work is proposed to our consideration by the Church on this the first day of May? Saint Joseph, a “just man,” spent the greater part of his life toiling over a carpenter's bench in a humble village in Palestine. His was an existence outwardly no different from that of many other men of his time, engaged like him in the same demanding work. And yet such a singular existence is deserving of admiration and persuades the Church to hold it up as an exemplary model for all the workers of the world.

⁴⁰ Address to the XIX National Congress of CIF, n. 2, December 7, 1979.

⁴¹ This material was delivered as a Sunday Regina Caeli Message on May 1, 1982 in Rome, to the general public. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 10, 1982, p. 19.

⁴² Col 3:23f.

What is the reason for such a distinction? It is not difficult to recognize. It lies in the dedication to Christ that sustained Saint Joseph in all his toil. The presence in the house in Nazareth of the Word Incarnate, Son of God and son of his wife Mary, gave to Joseph a daily “raison d’être” for turning to bend over his workbench, so as to draw from his toil the sustenance necessary for the family. Truly “all that he did,” Joseph did “for the Lord”; and he did it “with all his heart.”

All Work Serves Human Persons

Today all workers are invited to look at the example of this “just man.” The singular experience of Saint Joseph is reflected in some way or other in the life of each one of them. However diverse may be the tasks that they perform, their activity is always directed towards the satisfaction of some human need: it is aimed at serving man. Besides, the believer well knows that Christ wished to be hidden within each human being, declaring explicitly that “whatsoever is done to one of the least of the brethren is as if it were done to himself.”⁴³ In every work it is therefore possible to “serve Christ,” if one follows the recommendation of Saint Paul and imitates the example of Saint Joseph, guardian and servant of the Son of God.

Today, the first of May, in addressing a very warm greeting to all of you assembled here in the Courtyard of St. Damasus, my most loving thoughts go out in a special way to the workers present here and, through them, to all the workers of the world, exhorting them to renewed awareness of their own dignity. By their toil they serve their brothers: they serve man and, in serving man, they serve Christ. May Saint Joseph help them to see their work in this light, to value it in all its dignity and never lack the strong motivations which might support them in moments of difficulty.

⁴³ Mt 25:40.

74.

HUMAN WORK: A SHARING IN CHRIST'S KINGSHIP⁴⁴

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God, Dominion over the Earth, Human Development/Progress, Human Rights/Dignity, Gospel of Work, Service, Solidarity.

“Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.”⁴⁵ The word of God the Creator assigns man an irreplaceable task for the development of the potentials inherent in the universe. He is called to share in the work of the Creator, significantly defined by the Bible with the word “work.” According to his abilities, he continues, develops and completes what God has begun.

The Gospel of Work

But the significance of human work is not exhausted in this task. It is irreplaceable also for the building of a more just society, where truth and love reign, and there is visibly manifested, therefore, the promise of the Kingdom, that promise contained in the Redemption of Christ. “For this reason,” I said in Guadalajara during my apostolic journey to Mexico, “work must not be a mere necessity, but it must be considered a real vocation, a call from God to build a new world in which justice and brotherhood dwell, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, in which there will certainly not be shortages or limitations. Work must be the means for the whole of creation to be subjected to the dignity of the human being and child of God.”⁴⁶

Work Can Open Us up to Christ

Deepening our reflection under the guidance of the Second Vatican Council, we “know through faith that by offering his labor to God a man becomes associated with the redemptive work itself of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labor

⁴⁴ This material was delivered as an address on February 15, 1984 in Rome, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20, 1984, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Gen 1:28.

⁴⁶ *Insegnamenti*, II, 1979, p. 281 and *L'Osservatore Romano* in English, 12 February 1979, p. 11.

when at Nazareth he worked with his own hands.”⁴⁷ Indeed, work, redeemed by Christ, becomes for man an expression of his own vocation, that of being called to conform himself to Christ to live in a profound intimate union with the Son of God. In the perspective opened up by the Redemption, work becomes one of the fundamental modalities through which man is opened to himself and, in Christ, to God the Father.

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has taught us also that one of the principal fruits of this union with Christ is the sharing in his kingship, that is, in his destiny as Lord of the universe and of history.⁴⁸ Christ exercised his kingship above all in service to his brothers and sisters, a service inspired by love.⁴⁹ Sharing in this kingship, man acquires a renewed freedom to place himself generously at the service of his neighbors in the daily toil of work, work that is perceived and exercised as a manifestation and testimony of love.

Hidden in a work that is at times heavy and wearisome, love does not always immediately reveal its presence. Gradually, however, if the one who is working has faith and perseverance, love begins to manifest itself in the solidarity that is created between man and man. Performed with and for love, work is a great opportunity for man’s growth, to whom, as my venerated predecessor Pius XII said, it assures “a field of proper freedom, not only economic freedom, but also political, cultural and religious freedom.”⁵⁰

Collaborating with God

In addition, work implies a “royal service” because by enduring its toil “in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn every day in the activity that he is called upon to perform.”⁵¹ In work conceived in this way, there is fulfilled, in continuity with Christ’s mission, man’s capacity to transform the world, making it homogeneous with his sublime dignity as one redeemed. The redemption of work puts man in a position to exercise his “regal duty” that is, to respond to the Creator’s command to subdue and have dominion over

⁴⁷ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67.

⁴⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 36.

⁴⁹ Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

⁵⁰ Pius XII, Message of September 1, 1944.

⁵¹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 27.

the earth.⁵² Therefore *Gaudium et spes* can affirm that work “comes immediately from the person. In a sense, the person stamps the things of nature with his seal and subdues them to his will.”⁵³

The Inheritance of Work

Work has a great creative value also because it leads the individual to commit himself to the whole family, social, and political community.

Every person, in fact, constantly receives help from those near him, as well as from those far away. He avails himself of the material, moral, cultural, and religious goods created by whole generations about whom he has perhaps never heard. He lives from the work, the effort, the fervor, the devotion, the sacrifices that others have made. No one of these goods, the fruit of this enormous labor, is foreign to him. It would therefore be selfish to accept all this richness passively without committing oneself to respond to it by offering with his own work a positive contribution to the solution of the dramatic social situation in which we are living today.

This basic consideration throws light on the dimension of participation inherent in human work. It throws open to man the path to self-fulfillment, offering him the incomparable opportunity to communicate himself to others, in stable and firm relationships, attentive to concrete needs, above all to that supreme deed to find a meaning for his existence. This dimension, opened by the Redemption of Christ, is thus revealed as an optimum antidote to the situation of alienation into which human work often spills.

The Holy Year of the Redemption is a call for each one of us to rediscover in Christ the Redeemer the most profound meaning of work and, with it, the joy that springs from the awareness of making a personal contribution to the building of a renewed world.

⁵² Gen 1:28.

⁵³ *Laborem exercens*, n. 67.

75.

CHRIST IS THE MODEL FOR THE WORKER⁵⁴

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God, Dominion over the Earth, Gospel of Work, Human Rights/Dignity, Humanization/Dehumanization, Just Wage, Meaning of Work, Unemployment.

Today I would like to reflect with you on the value and dignity of human work. Jesus Christ was a carpenter's son. He worked for the greater part of his life on Earth in the same trade as his foster father, Joseph. By working, Jesus proclaimed in the ordinary activities of his daily life the dignity of work. All human work is a participation in the activity of the Creator himself. Whether we work in a factory, an office, a hospital, the fields, or as a rickshaw driver or as a mother at home—whatever work we do—we all share in the creative activity of God. This gives all work its meaning and worth. “The basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person.”⁵⁵ It follows from this that all human work, however humble it may appear, must be fully respected, protected and justly remunerated, so that families and indeed the whole community may live in peace, prosperity and progress.

Work brings joy and fulfillment, but it also entails toil and fatigue. The fulfillment and joy spring from the fact that human work enables men and women to exercise that mastery over the earth which God has entrusted to them.⁵⁶ For God said to the first man and woman: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ This material was delivered as a homily on February 3, 1986 in Ranchi, India, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *Origins*, February 20, 1986, p. 593.

⁵⁵ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

⁵⁶ Gen 1:26-28.

⁵⁷ Gen 1:28.

The Toil of Work

The work we do, however, may not be the type of work we would prefer or it may be hazardous, such as work deep down in the mines. The work may be hard, monotonous, and exhausting. Such is our human condition. It is written in the Bible that because of disobedience man will earn his bread by the sweat of his brow and that the land upon which he labors will not easily yield its fruits.⁵⁸ Yet for a worker who places his trust in God, the toil and fatigue of work are accompanied by the joy of knowing that he or she is collaborating with the Creator.

Christ Is Our Model

For those of us who are Christians, Jesus is the perfect model and inspiration for our work. In his work, Jesus remained in deep communion with his heavenly Father. We should therefore consider carefully how Jesus faithfully performed his daily work during the many years of his life in Nazareth. This is a powerful example for all of us. The witness of Jesus in his work as a carpenter fills us with joy and encourages us to persevere in our humble service to humanity.

Furthermore, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we must never forget the reason why Jesus came into the world. Jesus came to accomplish the work of salvation. And how did he accomplish the work of salvation? Through his suffering and death on the cross and by the victory of his glorious resurrection. All human work, no matter how insignificant it may seem, shares in this work of salvation. As I stated in my encyclical on human work; “By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn everyday in the activity that he is called upon to perform.”⁵⁹

Defending the Worker

The church, seeking to be faithful to the example and witness of Christ, has a very special concern for the welfare of workers. The well-known encyclicals of the popes, starting with *Rerum novarum* of Leo XIII, have continually defended the right of the worker to a just wage and to proper working conditions. The church’s teaching is founded on the principle that every human person is created in the image of God and

⁵⁸ Gen 3:16-19.

⁵⁹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 27.

has a unique God given dignity. Thus no one should be used as a mere instrument for production, as though the person were a machine or a beast of burden. The church rejects any social or economic system that leads to the depersonalization of workers. Over and above her concern for proper working conditions, the Church insists on a just wage for workers, a wage that takes into account the needs of their family. “Just remuneration for the work of an adult who is responsible for a family means remuneration which will suffice for establishing and properly maintaining a family and for providing security for his future.”⁶⁰

The Problem of Unemployment

My heart goes out in a special way to the many unemployed who want to work but are unable to find suitable employment, at times because of discrimination based on religion, caste, community, or language. Unemployment and underemployment give rise to frustration and a feeling of uselessness, and cause disharmony in the family. They bring anguish and untold hardships and weaken the very fabric and structure of society. They threaten the dignity of every man and woman. There is an urgent need to take fresh initiatives to solve this grave problem, and these initiatives often require collaboration on the national and international level. And it is crucially important that the negotiations and plans to overcome unemployment be marked by respect and dialogue between employers and those seeking work. . . .

Share the Light of Christ through Work

Yes, he has called us all in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the light. Indeed, he is “the way, and the truth, and the life.”⁶¹ And so he can lead us to the Father, to this God who is light and truth and holiness itself. Jesus calls us and invites us to share in his own divine life—through everything which makes up our earthly existence, through all the toil of our human work.

Accepting the light which is in Christ, we too must become “the light of the world.”⁶² We have to become “the salt of the earth,”⁶³ which gives taste to human life.

⁶⁰ *Laborem exercens*, n. 19.

⁶¹ Jn 14:6.

⁶² Mt 5:14.

⁶³ Mt 5:13.

As followers of Christ, you are called to be the light of Christ here in India and with Christ to transform the world. Let your work serve the good of your neighbor. Share with the underprivileged, the sick, and the handicapped. Strive to remove everything that oppresses people, and working together do all you can to solve the unemployment situation. Wherever you are, seek to radiate the presence of Christ: in your families, before your children, in your place of work, through the joyful practice of the virtues you have found in Jesus.

76.

THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE IS GIVEN IN PRAYER AND WORK⁶⁴

Leisure, Work and Prayer.

The Word of God, and especially the Gospel of St. Luke, that we read in today's liturgy speaks to us of two sisters, Martha and Mary, who received Jesus as a guest in their home not far from Jerusalem. He was their guest more than once, including during the last days before the Paschal events. And we, having heard them often, know well those words addressed to Martha by Jesus, in which he compares her work and daily solicitude to the attitude of her sister, who instead sought to listen to the Word of the Lord. Those words of Jesus are very significant, very symbolic: they speak to us of the value that all of us must introduce into our lives. They lead us to understand that all our work, or, in other words, everything that is constituted by our human activity, like the fruit that comes from the Word of God, has its own value, its own meaning. Jesus said on another occasion: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"⁶⁵; in this way man certainly lives by the fruit of his labor, but at the same time he lives by what comes from the Word of

⁶⁴ This material was delivered as a homily on July 20, 1986 in Rome, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 11, 1986, p. 2.

⁶⁵ Mt 4:4.

God. In this way a program of Christian life was formed, constituted by the two well-known elements *ora et labora*: and this program was brought to us, as the very essence of Christian civilization and culture, especially in the West, by the great Patriarch of the West, St. Benedict. *Ora et labora*: they are his words, very simple but at the same time extraordinarily profound, explaining to us the meaning, the structure, of human life. Each of us must know how to combine the two: work and prayer; one's activity and listening to the Word of God.

We Must Live More by the Word of God

We can say that the modern world is more open to what comes from human activity. We live, especially here in the West, in a scientific-technological civilization in which man attaches much greater importance and confidence to the works of his mind and hands, and in which he is also much more committed to his activities and successes. But this attitude often creates a spiritual void, causing man to be unhappy in spite of all the successes of his work, of his temporal activity oriented exclusively toward earthly goals. And so there is a great need to counterbalance this disproportion. We must live more by the Word of God.

Encountering certain groups of young people today, we see that they are once again seeking the Word of God and prayer, because they see, they experience, the fact that they do not find in their activity, in all that makes up the activity of man and of this world, full satisfaction for their spirits.

Whence comes my wish for you: with this brief consideration based upon today's Gospel, the Liturgy of the Word, my accompanying hope for all of you, my dear collaborators, personnel of the Papal Villas, and among you the Director, is that you will be capable of making a beautiful synthesis of these two elements of human life, that you will be capable of living, certainly, by your daily work, but also of illuminating this work with the much greater light that comes from the Word of God; that which becomes ours, that is, properly man's, in prayer.

77.

INDUSTRIOUSNESS IS A VIRTUE BUT NOT AN END IN ITSELF⁶⁶

Christian Witness/Mission, Common Good, Gospel of Work, Solidarity, Spirituality.

Tolerance is a moral value of your culture, a value not to be underestimated. In my recent encyclical I pointed out “the positive and moral value of the growing awareness of interdependence among individuals . . . sensed as a system determining relationships.”⁶⁷ In fact, interdependence, when it is recognized and practiced, can lead people to discover and to give a name to that form of realizing the common good which is solidarity. It would greatly benefit community life if, in addition to tolerance, which is itself so precious in a world troubled by conflict, public life had at its foundation the moral category of solidarity, which “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, so that all might be truly responsible for all.”⁶⁸

Persons Have Priority over Work

In these days, as I have traveled through Emilia, one of the richest regions of Italy, my thoughts have turned repeatedly to the Gospel parable of the rich man who is tempted to trust exclusively in the goods that he has managed to put aside.⁶⁹

Though even among you one encounters the sad phenomenon of unemployment—especially among the young—and other situations of social distress which the Mayor recalled in his address and in regard to which I express my sincere compassion, it is a pleasure to note that the industriousness of your population, its remarkable spirit of enterprise and efficiency, are usually rewarded by good levels of income together with a great ability to set aside savings.

⁶⁶ This material was delivered as an address on June 4, 1988 in Piacenza, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 8-15, 1988, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁷ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

⁶⁸ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

⁶⁹ Lk 12:12-21.

However, material well-being and economic success, while they represent a legitimate desire of man cannot constitute the one aspiration of life. The education of persons and the building up of the family presume a constant reference to transcendent values and to a culture that always gives the person priority over work and material goods.

The Practical Duty to Seek the Common Good

This is not to be interpreted as an invitation to flee one's concrete responsibilities. The Church recalls with clarity the duty to collaborate in the economic development of a territory through one's efforts and through investments, in order to help assure new employment possibilities, both for the present and the future, in a location as near as possible to home.

The [Second Vatican] Council said "the common good is seriously endangered by those who hoard their resources unproductively."⁷⁰ I myself recently recalled that "collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of all towards all, and must be shared by the four parts of the world: East and West, North and South."⁷¹

Productivity Is Not an End in Itself

Take care that your industriousness always remains a virtue, that it expresses your capacities and a proper commitment of earthly realities, but that it does not become the sole or principal value of your lives. Do not let it happen that, under the influence of a system dominated almost exclusively by productivity as an end in itself, dedication to work becomes alienation and a force destructive of the person and the family.

The Practice of Faith

The history of this two-thousand-year-old city, whose roots were sprinkled at the outset by the blood of the martyr St. Antonino, the herald of the gospel in your midst, witnesses to the efforts of persons who have developed with equal intensity the

⁷⁰ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 65.

⁷¹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 32.

seeds of diligence and of faith, of fidelity to the homeland and love for the Church. Under the human and religious aspects, your remote and recent past, rich in saints and illustrious citizens, illustrates the fact that the principles of Catholicism belong to the historical heritage of the people of Piacenza.

May this apostolic visit likewise serve to increase that Christian humanism which inspires the conduct of your people. May no one content himself with a piety consisting only of exterior practices, traditions, and mere observance; rather, may the spiritual life of each be filled with true Christian faith, willed and consistent. Since one is never a Christian by himself, do not live your faith in isolation, but in the solidarity and support of the Christian community: and offer to others, in your turn, the gift of faith that you have received. The Church of Piacenza in Synod is to continue among you the dialogue of friendship and salvation to which the Pope wishes to contribute today.

The hope and wish for a better future is entrusted to your vitality, solidarity, and faith.

Christian Witness

The Pope says to each of you: refuse to allow the marvel of a life lived in full humanity to be concealed in anonymity and silence. “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel.”⁷² Participate, increase dialogue, support the organizations charged with the common good, assist those among you and in the world who are afflicted by suffering.

⁷² Lk 11:33.

78.

SOLIDARITY IS REALIZED IN SERVICE⁷³

Common Good, Service, Solidarity, Unemployment.

“We are all responsible for all.”⁷⁴ This is true in every context and every order of human life, especially in the order of civil and social coexistence.

This interdependence can be felt as a kind of coercion, or it can be accepted and embraced as a moral duty. When it is interpreted in the second way, interdependence becomes a value: the value of solidarity. Solidarity is the firm and persevering commitment to the common good. Those who have responsibilities in the areas of government, business or the economy—but also each person in his daily toil—must question themselves and make decisions in the light of these two criteria; solidarity and common good. In this view, special attention is accorded to the weakest and poorest members of society.

Value of Accomplishments Displayed in Service

Solidarity is realized in service. Our human accomplishments are valuable to the degree that they show themselves to be instruments in the service of our fellow man.

Too often, even today, human dignity is trodden underfoot, offended, humiliated. An individualism which is often insensitive to the needs of others and exasperated by the consumerism that seems to characterize our age drives many people to make their own material well-being their greatest aspiration in life.

In the meantime, too many men and women still are without work, which should be a real possibility for all, given that it constitutes a fundamental dimension of life. Unemployment, which today strikes especially the young, is a sad reality which keeps those who are afflicted by it from realizing their human vocation.

⁷³ This material was delivered as an address on June 5, 1988, in Castel San Giovanni, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 8-15, 1988, p. 11.

⁷⁴ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

Develop Your Abilities!

My presence in your midst, while it is meant to manifest the Church's concern for all human problems, is intended to be an appeal, an exhortation, a source of encouragement.

Aware of your human and spiritual energies, I exhort you to esteem your capacities, not to be afraid to unleash the resources of your creativity. May no one among us abdicate his responsibilities before life and its problems. Christ himself works silently in the depths of your freedom to lead you to produce, as St. Paul says, fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."⁷⁵

It is from this perspective that I invite all of you, citizens of Castel San Giovanni, together with those who are present here with you, to put into practice and to develop the capacities of your minds and hearts, even amidst the difficulties you may encounter.

79.

THE GAP BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICS HINDERS AUTHENTIC PROGRESS⁷⁶

Entrepreneurship, Human Development/Progress, Human Rights/Dignity, Materialism/Consumerism.

I began to reflect on [your] traditions as I observed the flourishing city from the helicopter: her homes and industry, her streets and avenues, all "watched over," as it were, by the bell-towers and cupolas of the churches. As I admired fields, harvests, vineyards, the true garden of this fertile Po valley, I saw in them a clear witness to the

⁷⁵ Gal 5:22.

⁷⁶ This material was delivered as an address on June 5, 1988 in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 8-15, pp. 14-15.

qualities of industriousness and intelligent imagination which characterize you, dear citizens of Reggio Emilia. In spite of the destruction you suffered during the last world war, you have, in fact, been able to adjust your economy to the new situations and to reach impressive levels in the national context. You have done so through an interesting synthesis of free initiative, state-subsidized businesses and cooperatives. Through creative thinking, industrial workers have succeeded in emerging efficiently and constructively from the crisis that had afflicted that sector. Likewise, the flourishing and intensive cultivation of the land and the development of specialized animal husbandry are the fruit of the combined contribution of agricultural experts and specialists in scientific and university research.

Fundamental Values Must Always Be Defended

The level of material well-being you have attained has certainly not eliminated certain problems common to many advanced societies, problems which increase the burden of those affected. I am referring to unemployment, immigration, the phenomenon of drugs, the situations of loneliness and disadvantage in which many of our brothers and sisters find themselves. A society which wishes to be just and to respect the rights of its members must strive to see that the fundamental values proper to man's dignity are defended always and in every case. No acceptance must be given to modern projects which fail to coincide with man's true progress. There is no authentic progress, in fact, in notions that open the way to a consumer and libertine mentality and mores, thus creating a rupture between technology and ethics, between material progress and spiritual growth.

The Church has always offered her commitment and concrete efforts to help consciences mature in this direction and to lead individuals and the community towards the goal of a true humanism. Here, too, your city is heir to stimulating examples of witness. Past generations have left here meaningful signs of their noble sentiments in buildings, works, and institutions that show their preferential love for those in greatest need of assistance and love.

80.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND OUR SOLIDARITY HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN GOD'S WILL⁷⁷

Dominion over the Earth, Environment, Fair Wage, Meaning of Work, St. Joseph, Service, Solidarity, Spirituality, Work and Family.

St. Joseph, the carpenter, and Jesus who shared his task during those long years invite us today to reflect on the dignity of human labor, of your daily work, dear brothers and sisters of Madagascar.

Many of you cultivate the land; you know, perhaps better than others, the gifts that man receives as well as the responsibility he bears. You love the land of your ancestors; it has a special place in your life; with your hands guided by the experience of successive generations, by ever increasing knowledge, you help this soil to produce food, you watch over fertile herds.

Mission from the Creator

Quite naturally, you fulfill the mission which the Creator gave to man made in his image, to “subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness,” as the Second Vatican Council said, taking its inspiration from the Bible.⁷⁸

In order to do this work well, every day you experience the effort and the trouble that are necessary. You also frequently experience even uncertainty or fear, because so many things do not depend on you! You must struggle against the hostile elements of nature; you must protect your fields and watch over your flocks that are often threatened. However, the beauty of the human worker is his patience, perseverance, and ability to overcome obstacles.

This is the price you pay for drawing from your work what is needed for the

⁷⁷ This material was delivered as a homily on May 1, 1989 in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 22, 1989, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁸ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 34.

sustenance of your family and others. By using God's gifts better, your trained hands can offer new gifts to the human family. I am thinking not only of agriculture, but of all the professions; the true meaning of human work is "a prolongation of the Creator's work, a service to their fellow men."⁷⁹

Man Is Responsible for Nature

In this regard, I would like to repeat how great is man's responsibility for nature, even though the Creator entrusted it to him. From the north to the south of your great island, I was able to admire its beauty, the diverse wealth of the land and its fruits. However, we know that the use which is made of it runs the risk of depleting and impoverishing the soil. Throughout the world to some small degree people are aware of the damage caused by exploitation which destroys much without considering the lives of the future generations. Today everyone shares in the great responsibility to show that they are worthy of the mission entrusted by the Creator, in assuring the protection of creation.

Economic Justice

To ensure that the worker's dignity is fully respected, the first human value which must inspire all the partners is simple justice, that is, an income adequate to support the worker and his family. In today's society, where it is impossible to live isolated in a small group, it is just that essential services be equitably assured, without deducting an excessive share of the product of labor. I am thinking of the possibilities of acquiring instruments for work without the debt becoming crushing. I am thinking of the means of transport and the conditions of marketing products. These are only simple examples. I mention them to remind you that all people are in solidarity, whatever type of activity they perform. In all these fields justice and fraternity meet; the gospel appeals for love of neighbor meet the aspirations of all.

Unemployment

Among you, as in many other countries, there is a serious concern that we cannot pass over in silence: it is becoming very difficult, especially for young people, to find a job. Unemployment causes much suffering. I know that such a problem is not solved by words. However, must not one reflect and act, since it is well understood

⁷⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 34.

throughout the whole of society that it is just to assure every member of the community a livelihood by the fruit of his labor? All those in positions of responsibility can contribute to this elementary respect for their brothers and sisters; they must strive to provide suitable means for professional training or for the better utilization of natural resources to the advantage of all the inhabitants. In the whole world there is still much to be done in this regard.

Primacy of the Spirit over Matter

Your people have a great sense of friendship, of sharing; in your traditional culture each one feels bonded to the whole society, giving primacy to the spirit over material goods. These are values which modern society must not compromise. On the contrary, they are indispensable for truly human progress. We have the conviction of faith that man's effort, with the help of God the Creator and Savior, can lead him to "perfect himself and bring about a more humane ordering" of the world.⁸⁰

In creating man and woman, God called them to "fill the earth" and "be its masters."⁸¹ That means that man has a real responsibility, but also that he must remember God when he is doing his work. In order to produce, he is using that which God created.

The Psalm of today's Mass tells us that, "if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labor."⁸² One cannot forget that all activity and work are a cooperation in the divine work of creation. Without that, it is "vain for you to rise early, or put off your rest," as the Psalmist recalls.⁸³

It is necessary, therefore, to keep God before your eyes in beginning your work and in finishing it. We must remember that our responsibilities and our solidarity, in work and in other things, have their origin in God's will.

That has been taught us most of all by Jesus, the worker who worked alongside St. Joseph. That has been taught us by Joseph himself, the carpenter of Nazareth.

⁸⁰ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 35.

⁸¹ Gen 1:26, 28.

⁸² Ps 127:2.

⁸³ Ps 127:2.

81.

HUMAN WORK DERIVES FROM AND BUILDS ON GOD'S CREATION⁸⁴

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God, Culture of Work, Dominion over the Earth, Gospel of Work, Materialism and Consumerism, Spirituality, Work and Prayer.

“Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made . . .”

Every day the Church repeats these words in the celebration of the Eucharist, at the offering of the bread.

Beloved brothers and sisters here present, I wish to meditate on this liturgical blessing with you. The truth regarding the sanctification of human work finds in this blessing its simplest, yet at the same time, its fullest expression.

Yes, “the work of human hands” is part of the sacrifice of Christ. Its place is there where the “source of life and sanctity” is. . . .

Generosity of Creation

Lord, God of all creation! First of all we want to meditate on the mystery of creation, that is, the truth regarding your fatherly generosity. Creation is the first and fundamental gift. Everything that exists does so thanks to you who, being one, “are Existence itself.” Thanks to you, whose name (as we know from the Book of Exodus and the testimony of Moses) is “He who is.”

Furthermore, you alone, “He who is,” are the beginning and the end. In you “we live and move and have our being.”⁸⁵ The creation of man is a singular gift, since the human being—man and woman—has been created in the image and likeness of God, the

⁸⁴ This material was delivered as a homily on August 20, 1989 in Oviedo, Spain, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 4, 1989, p. 5

⁸⁵ Acts 17:28.

Creator. “And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’. . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”⁸⁶

Human Work Begins with God

Thus, the beginning of human work is contained in the mystery of creation, that admirable “work” of the Creator himself. The Book of Genesis tells us that God the Creator, like man, worked for six days so as to rest on the seventh. Human work contains two elements. The first is talent; the second is effort. Each person receives talent from God through his parents, and also directly, through other people, through one’s surroundings, from educators and teachers. The parable of the talents, which we have just read, tells us that the talent has to be used well: it cannot be wasted (“hidden in the ground”). To use these talents, one must face up to the effort of work.

This “effort” is none other than that required of each person in using his intelligence and will to master the gift which is gratuitously offered by the Creator and the heritage passed on by the culture to which he belongs. In this way, through industry, he develops the “talents” received; he makes them grow; he makes them correspond more and more to present and future needs. Seen from this perspective, the history of work is the creative exercise of this human “effort” in the face of a continually renewed awareness of needs which by their very nature cannot be satisfied. It is also the development of the possibilities which spring from the patrimony of “talents,” that is, the things and knowledge accumulated in the past.

Furthermore, work is never the application of an anonymous force. Rather it is a dynamic expression of culture. It is here that the primordial and subjective meaning of this “effort” in dominating the earth is introduced: it is an act of a person who is an “image of God,” that is, an individual “capable of deciding for himself and who tends towards the realization of himself.”⁸⁷ Work should not be limited to the efficient production of things in the context of the machinery of society; it should be, above all, the humanization of nature and the growth of man in his humanity, which is a decisive element in testing the truth about man.

This ethical basis of work—verifiable according to whether or not it takes into account the dignity of persons and their relations of freedom and solidarity—judges every attempt not to give responsibility to man, and everything which reduces him to a

⁸⁶ Gen 1:28-31.

⁸⁷ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

simple cog in a machine which moves according to the presumed inexorable laws of things. All the wisdom contained in the admirable maxim “*ora et labora*”—pray and work—is based on the correlation between “talents” and “effort,” between God’s sovereign initiative and man’s free collaboration. Contemplation of the gift and responsible action mutually enrich each other. May work be an experience of the synthesis of beauty, truth, and good, leading to an ever more human life!

Building upon Creation

The psalm of today’s Liturgy says the same thing. While the parable from St. Matthew’s Gospel speaks of the necessity of effort, so that human work may yield appropriate fruits, the psalm shows the help and cooperation of God himself, without which work could be useless. “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”⁸⁸ We all know well that a house is not built without human work. Nevertheless, at the same time, the Psalmist indicates a fundamental aspect of all “spirituality” of human work. In effect, through work man constantly builds upon that which has already been created. The work of the Creator always comes first.

Temptation to Ignore God

Certainly, the scientific and technical advances which have reduced human “effort” are extraordinary and admirable, since they perfect a person’s work and multiply the goods available to satisfy his needs. In this how can one fail to see man’s fulfillment of God’s command to subdue and master the earth? And, notwithstanding that, the reference to God as creator and origin has been obscured in the person of today’s urban-industrial society. The great “conquests” blind people, who are subject to the temptation of Genesis. The denial of his creaturely dependence corresponds to the unleashing of his desire for power.

Hence the fundamental ambivalence of the progress that has been made, where the increasingly greater dominion over things goes hand in hand with lack of clarity about the meaning of human life; where the great technical development of work does not lead to the establishment of the essential principles of dignity and solidarity, thus causing greater depersonalization, disinterest, and exploitation; where man changes from being master of nature to being its destroyer. The free and responsible agent in the work of creation now wants to become the “master.” He thinks he is self-sufficient; he does not believe that there is any need for the “*God hypothesis*.” He

⁸⁸ Ps 127:1.

separates the “*ora*” from the “*labora*.” He gives into the desire for power, and he ends up faced with the fact that every society constructed without God eventually turns against man himself, the builder of “Towers of Babel.” Is it not clear for all to see that societies of atheistic materialism with their collectivist-bureaucratic organization of human work are a failure? But on the other hand, it is clear that neither are there fewer problems in the neo-capitalistic society, over-concerned with reward, which alters the just balance of the world of labor, a society also affected by a growing materialistic culture.

A New Culture of Work

Therefore, the task of Christians today, for the good of all people, is to give witness, by the way they work, to an authentic humanization of nature, leaving in it a trail of justice and beauty, showing the true human meaning of work and thus giving obedience and glory to the Creator. Above all, it is a question of rebuilding in the world of work and economy a new subject, bearer of the new culture of work. It is not enough for each one to exercise well the role which society has given him: businessman, trade unionist, politician, consumer, or economist; he must do new things, try new ways, new initiatives, new forms of solidarity and labor organization based on this culture.

The impulse to undertake such tasks can come solely from the sense of “gratuity” which derives, before any consideration of convenience, from an awareness of having a common destiny of freedom inscribed in the economy of Creation and Redemption. For this very reason, man’s work will be judged above all by the works of today’s Gospel: “Well done . . . good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much: enter into the joy of your master.”⁸⁹

Since work has this definitive dimension, it is therefore essential to practice what St. Paul says in his Letter to the Colossians (Second Reading): “Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”⁹⁰

Charity and Work

And finally: “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony,”⁹¹ because the basic and ultimate measure of the value of human

⁸⁹ Mt 25:21, 23.

⁹⁰ Col 3:23, 17.

⁹¹ Col 3:14.

work is charity. Work “with love,” not only with hands and mind, but united to Christ. “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.” “Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.”⁹² The value, the non-transferable and eternal value of all human work, is ultimately measured by this inheritance. Charity is the key to this inheritance.

82.

WORK SHOULD RESPECT A PROPER HIERARCHY OF VALUES⁹³

Christian Witness/Mission, Common Good, Dominion over the Earth, Economic Laws and Profits, Environment, Gospel of Work, Human Rights/Dignity, Justice, Materialism and Consumerism, Solidarity.

Today I wish to meditate along with you on the message which the Lord offers us in this Eucharistic celebration. “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear . . . look at the birds in the sky . . . learn from the way the wild flowers grow.”⁹⁴

Materialism

What do these words spoken by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount mean? What was their significance for those who heard them for the first time? What meaning do they encompass for us today?

⁹² Col 3:24.

⁹³ This material was delivered as a homily on May 10, 1990 in Monterrey, Mexico, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 21, 1990, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁴ Mt 6:35-36; 28.

Truly these words of the Gospel seem to contradict so many criteria and attitudes which we see in the modern world. In reality, productivity, earnings, and economic progress seem to be considered as the ultimate and definitive criteria governing human behavior for humanity and today's society. And it is in relation to these criteria that persons and peoples are judged and evaluated and given a place on the social scale according to the importance paid to them and the power they possess.

If this hierarchy of values is accepted, the human being would be obliged to seek possessions continually as life's only goal. Therefore the person would be evaluated not for what he or she *is*, but for what he or she *has*.

Creator and Creatures Are above Human Productions

Jesus, the Master of the Sermon on the Mount, the one who proclaims the Beatitudes, teaches us first of all that the Creator and creatures stand above the works of man. Man and society can produce only industrial commodities which advance civilization and progress to the degree that they find in the created world the resources which allow them to carry out their work.

To you, humanity, gazing contentedly at the works of your hands, the fruits of your genius, Christ says: Do not forget the One who gave origin to everything! Do not forget the Creator! And further, the more deeply you come to know the laws of nature and the more you discover its wealth and potential, so much the more do you have to be mindful of him.

Respect Creation

Do not forget the Creator—Christ tells us—and *respect creation*. Accomplish your work by correctly using the resources God has given you! Transform nature's wealth with the help of science and technology, but do not abuse it nor be usurpers or exploiters without concern for the goods of creation! Do not destroy or contaminate! Remember your neighbor and the poor! Think about future generations!

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ says this in a special way to the people of our time, who are increasingly coming to see the unavoidable need for protecting the environment they live in.

How lovingly the Master and Redeemer gazes upon the beauty of the created world! The visible world has been created for man. Therefore Christ says to those who listen to him: Are you not worth much more than the birds in the sky and the lilies of the field?⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Mt 6:26, 28.

Respect for the Human Person

Certainly we are more important in God's eyes. What gives worth and value to the human being is having been created in the image and likeness of God; this is reflected in his or her nature as a person, and in the ability to know what is good and to love it.

But precisely for this reason the person cannot allow his or her spiritual being to be subjected to what is inferior in the hierarchy of creatures. People cannot take as the final goal of their existence what the earth and the temporality of created things offer them. They cannot lower themselves to serve things, as if these were the sole end and the final destiny of their lives.

On the contrary, man is called to seek God with all his strength, including by means of his work in the world. Only in God does man find confirmed his very freedom, domination, and superiority over all other creatures. And if sometimes this simple and profound belief grows weak, contemplation of nature itself should make us recall that if God takes such care of all creatures, what will he not do to see to it that we have all we need?

Seek Justice

To us human beings falls a basic task: to seek the Kingdom of God and his justice.⁹⁶ We must use all our strength in this task, because that Kingdom is "like a treasure hidden in a field, the pearl of great price," which the Gospel speaks to us about; and to obtain it we must do everything possible, even to the point of "selling all we have,"⁹⁷ that is to say, having no other desire in our hearts. In this task our work too must be part of the effort we expend in seeking God's Kingdom.

But we must be wary of a temptation: the desire to place earthly goods above God. For this reason Christ tells us: "You cannot serve God and money, for no one can serve two masters."⁹⁸ If what is represented by the Biblical symbol "money" succeeds in making itself the object of a higher and more exclusive love on the part of persons and society, then we are witnessing the temptation to ignore God.⁹⁹ Yet can we not state

⁹⁶ Mt 6:33.

⁹⁷ Mt 13:44-45.

⁹⁸ Mt 6:24.

⁹⁹ Mt 6:24.

that this temptation, at least to some extent, exists in our world? Do we not see it especially in certain regions and people? Isn't this ignoring of God already a reality in various forms: first in the field of human thought and next in that of its application? Has not living as though God does not exist become a program for many people of our time?

Jesus of Nazareth speaks to his contemporaries, but his words extend with awesome force even into our own days and problems. These are eternal topics for humanity, yet we frequently see that the hierarchy of values has been inverted: what is secondary and transitory is placed first: it goes to the top of the list. On the contrary, what must really occupy the first place is always God alone. It cannot be otherwise. For this reason Christ tells us: "Seek first the Kingdom and its justice, and all these things will be given you besides."¹⁰⁰

Therefore, what must be done so that the search for the Kingdom may be a reality in the lives of individuals, families and society?

Service of One's Neighbor

As we see in the reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles which we heard, the true disciples and followers of Christ have tried to answer this question since the beginnings of Christianity. The Scripture passage tells us that the first disciples "held everything in common."¹⁰¹ This fact is very rich in meaning. For the search for the Kingdom demands above all love, love of God and love of neighbor.¹⁰² In this sense, the first disciples placed their earthly goods at the service of love. That is to say, they tried to direct the new life they had embraced towards serving the common good, or the service of one's neighbor. For this reason they sold their possessions and distributed them among everyone, according to the needs of each. Simultaneously an important aspect of the community was "breaking bread in their homes and taking their meals with exaltation and sincerity of heart."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Mt 6:33.

¹⁰¹ Acts 2:44.

¹⁰² Mk 12:34.

¹⁰³ Acts 2:45-46.

Responsibilities of Business Leaders

These are only a few words, but they are full of meaning! The light which they radiate must enlighten the world of production and the economy too, so that the perspective of the common good may be opened up with farsightedness and generosity.

A unified effort for the sake of others is a need which seeks to enlist leaders in business and industry in the difficult tasks of administering justly the fruits of human activity. It includes creating wealth and jobs, thereby making a contribution towards raising the level of society's well-being and clearing the way for the integral advancement of persons. Solidarity appeals equally to those engaged in the world of technology which is "undoubtedly man's ally. It makes work easier; it improves it, speeds it up and augments it."¹⁰⁴ Finally, it appeals to every worker, to every person, who must direct his or her work towards the good of everyone else.

Poverty

Among you who are listening to me, brothers and sisters, there are many who are assured a stable job which give them much satisfaction and allows them to provide properly for their families. Thanks must be given to God for all that. But how much suffering must those endure who cannot give their children food, clothing, and the necessary education? Those who live in a poor, overcrowded area lacking the most basic services and far from their jobs, work which sometimes pays poorly and is unstable, causing them to look towards the future with anguish and discouragement?

How many children are forced to go to work at an early age, how many workers carry out their professions under unhealthy circumstances, including a lack of legal and associative structures which could offer opportune protection for the rights of workers against abuses and the many forms of manipulation?

I am deeply moved by these hard and at times dramatic situations: they affect so many persons in the world of work and are tied to a whole series of factors, not only arising from those situations themselves but also structural in nature, that is, dependent upon the socio-economic and political organizations of society. For this reason, moved by my concern for the neediest, I wish to make a new call for social justice.

Defects of Capitalism

Without denying the good results achieved by the joint efforts of the public and private sectors in countries where freedom rules, we cannot, however, be silent about

¹⁰⁴ *Laborem exercens*, n. 5.

the defects of an economic system which frequently has money and consumption as its main power source. This subordinates the person to capital in a way which, without taking personal dignity into account, considers him or her to be only a gear in production's mammoth machine where one's work is treated as a simple commodity at the mercy of the tide of supply and demand.

Justice

It is certain that at the root of the evils which harm individuals and groups one always finds man's sin. Therefore the Church always tirelessly preaches conversion of heart so that all, in a unified spirit, may collaborate in the creation of a social order which is more in line with the demands of justice.

The Church cannot in any way let the flag of justice be snatched up by any ideology or political current, for justice is one of the first requirements of the Gospel and the core of her social teaching. Likewise, in this area the Church has to be present in the world with something to say about the values and principles which inspire community life, peace, peaceful coexistence and true progress. Precisely for this reason she has to oppose all those forces which try to sow certain forms of violence and hatred as a dialectical solution to conflicts. The Christian cannot forget that the noble struggle for justice must not be confused in any way with the program "which views class struggle as the only way to eliminate class-based injustices which are present in society and within classes themselves."¹⁰⁵

Solidarity

Seeing you here in such great numbers in this city of Monterrey, assembled by your common Christian faith to meet the Successor of Peter, I feel the desire well up in my heart to make an appeal to you for solidarity, for brotherhood without borders. Knowing that you are children of the same God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ has to prompt you to devote all of your unified strength under the impulse of faith to guaranteeing that this great country become more just, fraternal and welcoming. The ardent desire that your beloved country might advance materially and spiritually upon the foundations of Christian principles which have marked its pilgrimage through history prompts me to say this.

The solidarity I am calling you to must extend its roots deeply and seek its nourishment in the Holy Mass, the sacrifice of Christ who saves us. It must find its inspiration always in the word of God which enlightens the path of our lives.

¹⁰⁵ *Laborem exercens*, n. 11.

The Church listens continually to that Sermon on the Mount spoken by Christ. From generation to generation she listens to the Gospel which is the Gospel of work.

In our era this Gospel has become current in a new way in view of the numerous problems of socio-economic development; in view of the problems relating to capital, with the production and the distribution of goods being so disproportionate and unjust, especially in certain areas of the world.

83.

THE EXAMPLE OF ST. JOSEPH TEACHES THAT SANCTIFICATION COMES THROUGH WORK¹⁰⁶

Christian Witness/Mission, Dignity of Work, Meaning of Work, St. Joseph, Work and the Worker.

St. Joseph's day is a feast dear to all because he is the patron of the Church, the guardian and example of the people born from Christ's preaching and the model of wisdom for believers. They invoke him in their difficulties and in the problems of our day which truly challenge the Christian's mission. We in turn are inspired by him to be faithful guardians of the Gospel of Christ.

The Church, proposing him as the protector of workers and craftsmen, made him a point of reference and a model for the many persons who spend a great part of their time in seemingly profane activities. The husband of Mary teaches that a person's work is never extraneous to God's plan. Sanctification comes from work when the person works in harmony with the Creator, as did Joseph, the silent worker in the home of Nazareth.

¹⁰⁶ This material was delivered as a homily on March 18, 1991 in Camerino-San Servino Marche, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1991, p. 7.

Work and the Mystery of The Cross

Sharing the daily work of the most common activities with Joseph and Mary, Jesus enlightens us about the fact that all work, no matter if it is humble and hidden, draws a person closer to the mystery of the cross: it is a redemptive activity, it is a necessity and a liberation, it is a manifestation of the opportunity which the human person has to subdue the earth. Work makes life more human when it helps to build a new, more perfect world. As such, work makes implicit the proclamation that humanity is journeying towards the new heavens and the new earth foretold by Christ's resurrection.

Work and Sanctification

I want to remind the workers present here of all this—all those in this region who constantly strive to promote new and better living conditions: those who work the land and those who work in small or large industries; those who work in the trades and those who practice ancient and traditional arts; those who are searching for work and migrants; those who have traditional work places and those who use the most modern technologies. I want to remind everyone that work, which is sometimes seen as condemnation and servitude, has rather been assumed by Christ as a moment of redemption and the proclamation of liberation. It is the path to personal sanctification and salvation. It is the constructive moment of fraternal solidarity. Every profession can thus be understood as a particular vocation which confers a superior dignity on human work and a transcendent value because of the spiritual union with Christ. . . .

Personal Christian Witness

The Church's mission of evangelization has been entrusted by God to the free and generous collaboration of people. To each one the Lord says: "You will be my minister and witness."

Human mediation intimately touches the mystery, and with it the problem of every vocation to the apostolate: it makes fulfillment possible, it enriches and comforts people on their journey, from the moment in which they perceive its signs to the time that it is brought to its complete fulfillment. Every Christian is entrusted with the task of "naming" the fundamental vocation that flows from baptism and which is made specific in the various particular vocations. This is done through a different existential

path by which people intertwine their personal history with that of God, conforming themselves with radical availability in love to the heavenly Father in service to their brothers and sisters. . . .

Trust in the Lord

“Firm is the heart of the just one who trusts in the Lord.” Thus we sang to prepare ourselves to listen to the Gospel.

Firm is the heart of those who recognize God’s way in their lives who know how to trust in his promise and relive in their own life, as Joseph did, the behavior of the “just ones” which Scripture speaks of.

Those who trust in the Lord put the word of God at the center of their lives and listen to it always, as did Joseph and Mary, and docilely follow it.

Those who trust in the Lord and have no fear are not dismayed in the presence of the Most High, nor do they close themselves up in egoism.

Those who trust in the Lord are faithful and just.

Those who trust in the Lord do not fear to follow the path he has chosen for them.

Those who trust, work as God has ordained.

And this is the example given us forever by St. Joseph, husband of the Mother of God upon this earth.

Amen!

84.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS SHOWN IN THE FAMILY AND IN WORK¹⁰⁷

Community of Persons, Dominion over the Earth, Materialism and Consumerism, Meaning of Work, St. Joseph, Service, Work and Family.

In substance it is a question of two realities: the family and work, not two realities which are distinct, but which are rather connected to one another in a close, mutual relationship.

The Family and Work

The family and work! In the light of the Gospel and the Church's tradition, which are expressed not only in the continuity of her teaching but also in the Christian practice of life and morality, these two important human realities shed light on the proper hierarchy of values; they emphasize the primacy that belongs to the human being as a person and as a community of persons: in the first place, therefore, to the family. All work, and especially physical labor, binds the person to the world of things, to the whole "order" of things. The world has been given to mankind as a task by the Creator, as an earthly job: "Subdue the earth!" The words from the Book of Genesis indicate precisely this subordination of things to the person.¹⁰⁸ The visible world is "for man." Things are for people.

Consumerism

May this order be understood and respected! May it never be violated, and even less so upset! Modern progress, as can be clearly seen, has such a danger in itself. The "progressive" culture, with the exception of those projects which have the person as their true reference, all too easily becomes a culture of things rather than of people. There are so many things that can be done, the calls of advertising and publicity are so insistent, that there is the risk of being overcome. People can end up being, even against their will, slaves of things and of the desire for possessions. Does not perhaps

¹⁰⁷ This material was delivered as a homily on March 19, 1991, in Fabrino, Italy, to a general audience. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 2, 1991, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Gen 1:28.

the so-called consumerism represent the expression of “order” (or rather of “disorder”) in which “having” is more important than “being”? Is it perhaps not symptomatic that this line of culture is sometimes hostile to the beginning of life, almost as if that human being who is just beginning its existence were an impediment to the possession and use of things?

There is great risk of seeing the very dignity of the person offended, having its autonomy and deepest freedom jeopardized.

Servants of Sharing

Subdue the earth!

Dear brothers and sisters, accept the message offered to you by today’s liturgy and open your heart to the strength of the love which knocks down the barriers of selfishness and indifference. You are not slaves to selfish possession, but servants of sharing in solidarity! Fix the eyes of your spirit on the holy family and through the intercession of St. Joseph draw the determination that is enlightened by faith, courage, and perseverance in goodness! . . .

How much more easily society could find solutions to the problems that affect it would it accept the humble though eloquent witness of life offered in the home at Nazareth! With what concrete trust we would be able to look at others if our daily activity were seen as a valuable way of giving praise to the Creator and service to others!

Obedience

The family of Nazareth and, in a special way, the person of St. Joseph have a profound relation to this vast problem which is affecting mankind and which shows the order in which everyone must work. It is an order which concerns persons, families, and society, the world of labor and legislation. It involves the principal problem for mankind and its future.

In replying to Mary and Joseph: “I must be about my Father’s business,” Jesus shows that the human order in the family-labor field is established on a divine basis: the Father’s concern. For this reason, returning to Nazareth he lived in filial “obedience.”

This is one of the elements which are part of the life and work of every human family: the Father’s concern, confident trust in divine Providence.

After 30 years the time will come for Christ's messianic mission. And from that moment to the end he will reveal the meaning of the words spoken when he was 12 years old.

The obedience of the youth of Nazareth will be revealed as the redemptive "obedience" of the Son of God to the Father: obedience unto death.

Obedience to God, from whom "all fatherhood in heaven and on earth" has its origin and model.¹⁰⁹ Work also has its origin and model in this obedience.

The Father "works" unceasingly with the Son.¹¹⁰ God gives ultimate meaning and full dignity to all human activity, to all human activity on the earth.

The image of this meaning and dignity is the Son of God.

It is Christ who worked with Joseph the carpenter.

At the same work bench, he worked in the home at Nazareth.

Amen!

85. MARXISM HAS FAILED¹¹¹

Common Good, Dialogue and Cooperation, Economic Laws and Profits, Human Rights/Dignity, Justice, Meaning of Work, Private Property/Co-ownership, Service, Solidarity, Universal Destination of Goods, Work and Society.

One event seems to dominate the difficult period in which we are living: the conclusion of a cycle in the history of Europe and the world.

¹⁰⁹ Eph 3:15.

¹¹⁰ Jn 5:17.

¹¹¹ This material was delivered as an address on April 1, 1991 in Rome, to a general audience. The text was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 6, 1991, p. 3.

The Marxist system has failed, and precisely for the very reasons which *Rerum novarum* had already acutely and almost prophetically indicated. In this failure of an ideological and economic power which seemed destined to prevail over and even to root out the religious sense in human consciences, the Church sees—beyond all sociological and political factors—the intervention of God’s Providence, which alone guides and governs history.

The liberation of so many peoples, of distinguished Churches and of individual persons, should not, however, be transformed into an inappropriate sense of satisfaction or unjustified triumphalism.

Problems Remain

That system has, at least in part, been overcome; but in various areas of the world the most extreme poverty continues to prevail, entire populations are deprived of the most elementary rights and lack the necessary means to satisfy basic human needs. In the wealthiest countries one frequently observes a sort of existential confusion, an inability to live and to experience properly the meaning of life, even though surrounded by an abundance of material possessions. A sense of alienation and loss of their own humanity has made people feel reduced to the role of cogs in the machinery of production and consumption and they find no way to affirm their own dignity as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

Justice, Solidarity and Human Dignity

Yes, a system is finished; but the problems and situations of injustice and human suffering on which it fed have not, unfortunately, been overcome. It has failed to provide a satisfactory answer, but the question to which that answer had been given continues to remain current and urgent.

With the new encyclical the Church not only presents this question to the whole of humanity, but she also proposes adequate solutions. This means a renewed question about social justice, about solidarity among working people, about the dignity of the human person; it means not to be resigned to exploitation and poverty, never to abandon the transcendent dimension of the person, who wants to and who must place his own work at the heart of building society.

Right to Private Property and Entrepreneurial Activity

The social doctrine of the Church has always recognized the individual's right to private ownership of the means of production and has seen in this right a defense of freedom against every possible oppression. Furthermore, the division of property into the hands of many entails that each person must count on the cooperation of others to satisfy his needs, while the indispensable social exchange must be regulated by contracts in which the free will of one encounters that of another. In contrast to the overbureaucratic and centralized command economy, the free and socially inspired economy presupposes truly free subjects who assume precise responsibilities upon themselves, loyally respect their duties to their co-workers and constantly take the common good into account.

It is right, therefore, to recognize the ethical value of the free market and of entrepreneurial activity within it, of the ability to "arrange the meeting" between consumer needs and the adequate resources to meet them by free bargaining. On this point Leo XIII, in opposition to collectivist theories, vindicated the rights of individual initiative in the context of service required to be given to the community.

The Market is Not the Model of Social Life

The Catholic Church, however, has always refused and today continues to refuse to make the market the supreme rule and almost the model, or the summation, of social life. There is something that is due to the human person because he is a person, by reason of his dignity and his likeness to God, independently of his presence or not in the market, of what he possesses and therefore can sell, and of the means to buy what he needs. This something must never be disregarded, but rather demands respect and solidarity, the social expression of love which is the only attitude appropriate to the human person. There are human needs that are not accessible to the market, due to natural and social impediments, but which must be equally satisfied.

It is, in fact, the duty of the national and international community to answer these needs, either by giving direct assistance when, for example, an obstacle is insuperable, or by opening the way to proper access to the market, to the world of production and consumption, when that is possible.

Economic freedom is an aspect of human freedom which cannot be separated from its other aspects and which must contribute to the full realization of people in order to construct an authentic human community.

Universal Purpose of the World's Resources

Without a doubt, along with individual ownership, one must affirm the universal purpose of the world's resources. The owner of these resources must always remember their purpose and the fact that, while they guarantee his liberty, they also serve to defend and develop the freedom of others. When, on the other hand, he removes them from this complementary and co-essential function, he consequently removes them from the common good, betraying the purpose for which they were entrusted to him. No free economy can function for long and respond to the conditions of a life more worthy of the human person, unless it is framed in solid legal and political structures, and above all, unless it is supported and "enlivened" by a strong ethical and religious conscience.

This outline, ideal and real at the same time, is rooted in human nature itself. Man, in fact, is a being who "can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself."¹¹² He is a unique and unrepeatable subject who can never be absorbed into an undifferentiated human mass, and who truly fulfills his destiny when he is able to transcend his limited individual interests and to join himself to other human beings with many ties. This is the way the family is born; this is the way society is born.

Work Promotes the Person and the Human Community

Work, too, by its essential nature, promotes the autonomy of the person and the necessity of being joined with the work of others. Man works together with others, and through his work he enters into relationship with them: a relationship which can be one of opposition, competition or oppression, but also one of co-operation and membership in a community of solidarity.

Moreover, the human person does not work only for himself, but also for others, beginning with his own family and including the local community, the nation and all of humanity. This is the reality which work must serve. The free and fruitful gift of self is expressed even through work. By confirming the close connection between private property and the universal purpose of the earth's resources, the social doctrine of the Church is merely putting economic activity in the loftiest and broadest context of the general vocation of the human person.

¹¹² *Gaudium et spes*, n. 24.

Need for Grace and Personal Commitment

History has always known new attempts to construct a better and more just society, one marked by unity, understanding, and solidarity. Many of these attempts have failed, while others were directed against the human person himself.

Human nature, which is ordered toward social existence, also seems to reveal signs of division, dishonesty, and hatred. But this is why God, the Father of all, has sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, in order to overcome these constantly threatening dangers and to change the heart and mind of man by the gift of his grace.

Dear brothers and sisters!

A great commitment of the political, economic, social, and cultural level is necessary to build a society that is more just and worthy of the human person. But this is not enough! A decisive commitment must be made to the very heart of man, to the intimacy of his conscience, where he makes his personal decisions. Only on this level can the human person effect a true, deep, and positive change in himself, and that is the undeniable premise of contributing to change and the improvement of all society.

86.

FREE TIME SHOULD PROMOTE AUTHENTIC HUMANISM AND CONTEMPLATION¹¹³

Human Rights/Dignity, Leisure, Spirituality, Work and the Worker.

A tourist center, universally known as the “Pearl of the Atlantic” because of the great beauty with which the creator has endowed the scenery of these islands, because of the hospitable hearts of their inhabitants and the gift of the rest and health which can be found here, your land is the goal of a great number of men and women of different

¹¹³ This material was delivered as a Homily on May 13, 1991 in Maderia, Portugal, to Catholics of the Diocese of Funchal. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 20, 1991, p. 9.

countries, traditions, and creeds. This offers you the opportunity to give to your lives, through your use of free time, the Absolute of God, with the “things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, Christians have a fundamental role to play in it, in that they contribute an authentic ethical and spiritual context to the use of free time: a time that is propitious for the development of human values and the search for and contemplation of God.

It is certainly not without meaning that the Lord of History has allowed this century’s humanity to enter into the “civilization of rest,” offering many people the opportunity for a new space in their life which is parallel to their working hours, or rather, of free time which, because of the technological era, in many countries now surpasses working hours in length and importance.

Action and Rest

People are created in God’s image, and called to fulfill in their lives both the Creator’s active dimension as well as the Lord’s tranquil, joyous and festive encounter with his works: “God saw what he had made, and it was very good. . . . Then on the seventh day God finished the work which he had done and on the seventh day he rested from all work.”¹¹⁵ We could say that our century has shown itself memorable in the former dimension, but quite lacking in the latter. As a consequence, the progress created by technology has thus been limited almost exclusively to “dominating” nature and its products, but it has not progressed in the same manner to that dominion which people are called to exercise over their destiny. To the contrary, there is a marked loss of the awareness of their real self and their dignity.

Technical Efficiency versus the Human Dimension

Unfortunately, certain types of production work tend to deprive work of its human dimension and favor technical efficiency, thus becoming an arid experience, reduced to automatic acts and mechanical movements, marked by an obligatory pace, deprived of human relationships and amid which it is difficult to express one’s own identity. It is indispensable that free time regain the dimensions of humanity which work has lost.

¹¹⁴ Col 3:1.

¹¹⁵ Gen 1:31; 2:2.

Authentic Humanism

In particular free time should allow people to find the opportunity to achieve authentic humanism, which is that of the “Easter Person” which the Church proclaims and bears witness to, shining with new life, which liberates people from sin and opens to them the horizons of eternity, finding in God the rest for which hearts yearn.”¹¹⁶ Truly the Lord, in that he is absolutely good, rests in himself, in his fullness: the human person, the image of God, can rest only in God, in whom he or she finds meaning and holiness.

Easter Peace

“Easter People” do not need false infinities, or the most beautiful, the greatest, the most exciting, because they know that their unlimited freedom is enclosed and contained in the celebration of the Paschal event: Easter possesses and confers the freedom which makes our free time a most intimate principle. From this Paschal freedom is born the supremacy of the Christian life which spreads and gives peace, which leads the person to rest and even causes it. “Redeemed by Christ, and having become a new creature in the Holy Spirit, people in fact, can and must also love the things which God created. From God they receive them; they look upon them as coming from God’s hands, and they respect them. They thank the divine benefactor for them, and using and enjoying creatures in a spirit of poverty and freedom, they are taught the true possession of the world, as someone who has nothing and yet possesses everything: ‘Everything, in fact, is yours; but you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’”¹¹⁷

Celebration of the Goodness of God’s World

Thus in dignity, contemplation, and adoration, the new person confidently submits to the Lord in a great festival of the whole renewed creation. There is a celebration of the renewed splendor and the full goodness of the world in God; the risen Christ, in his infinite grace, frees people from their limits. Easter is the new creation of the world and of mankind. We celebrate all this in the Sunday Eucharist: that which is new, that which is creative, that which is restful, until “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ *Confessions*, I, 1.

¹¹⁷ 1 Cor 3:22-23; *Gaudium et spes*, n. 37.

¹¹⁸ Ordinary of the Mass, after the Our Father.

87.

WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE THE TABLE OF CREATION¹¹⁹

Universal Destination of Goods.

Creation belongs to everyone. Yes, as Lent draws near, when our Lord Jesus Christ calls us in a particular way to conversion, I wish to address each one of you and invite you to think about this truth and to do good deeds which will show your sincerity of heart.

This same Lord, whose supreme proof of love we celebrate at Easter, was with the Father from the beginning, preparing the wonderful table of creation, to which he meant to invite all without exception.¹²⁰ The Church has understood this truth, made known since the dawn of revelation, and she sees it as an objective to be proposed to people as a way of life.¹²¹ In more recent times she has repeatedly preached the universal destination of the goods of creation, both material and spiritual, as a central theme of her social teaching. Continuing this long standing tradition, the encyclical *Centesimus annus*, published on the occasion of the centenary of my predecessor Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, is meant to encourage reflection on this universal destination of goods, which comes before all particular forms of private property and which should give them their true meaning.

The Failure of Distributing Goods

However, it is sad to see how, in spite of the frequency with which these clearly expressed truths have been proclaimed, the earth with all its goods—which we have compared to a great banquet to which all the men and women who have lived or will live have been invited—is unfortunately in many ways still in the hands of a few minorities. Wonderful are the goods of the earth, both those which come directly from the generous hands of the creator and those which are the result of the activity of human beings, called to cooperate in the work of creation through their intelligence and labor. Moreover, all human beings need a share in those goods in order to reach

¹¹⁹ This material was delivered as a Lenten Message in 1992 from the Vatican, marking the fifth centenary of the evangelization of the American continent. The translation was taken from *Origins*, March 5, 1992, p. 634.

¹²⁰ Jn 1.1-3.

¹²¹ Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35.

their fullness. It is thus all the more painful to note how many millions of people are excluded from the table of creation.

For this reason I earnestly invite you to concentrate your attention on this year commemorating the fifth centenary of the evangelization of the American continent, which in no way should remain a mere historical anniversary. Our vision of the past must be complemented by a look around us and toward the future.¹²² We must try to discern the mysterious presence of God in history, where he engages us and calls us to give him definite responses. Five centuries of the Gospel's presence on that continent have still not produced a fair distribution of the goods of the earth. And this is all the more painful when we think of the poorest of the poor: the indigenous groups, and together with them many campesinos, offended in their dignity by being excluded from the exercise of even their most fundamental rights, which also are a part of the goods destined for all. The situation of these brothers and sisters of ours cries out for justice from the Lord. Consequently, a generous and bold reform of economic structures and agrarian policies needs to be fostered, so as to ensure well-being and the conditions required for the rightful exercise of their human rights by the indigenous groups and the great masses of the poor who have so often been unjustly treated.

For those people and for all the dispossessed of the world—for we are all children of God, brothers and sisters to each other, and the goods of creation are meant for us all—we must work hard and without delay so that they can occupy their proper place at the table of creation. In the season of Lent and also during campaigns of solidarity—Advent campaigns and weeks for the poor—a clear awareness that it is the Creator's will to place the goods of creation at the service of everyone should inspire work for the genuine and complete development of the person and of all people.

In a spirit of prayer and commitment we must listen carefully to the words: "Behold, I am at the door and knock."¹²³ Yes, it is the Lord himself who knocks gently at the heart of each one of us, without forcing us, waiting patiently for us to open so that he can come in and sit down at the table with us. But, again, we must never forget that—according to the central message of the Gospel—Jesus calls us through each of our brothers and sisters, and our personal response will serve as the criterion for being put at his right hand with the blessed or at his left with the accursed: "I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . I was naked . . . sick . . . in prison."¹²⁴

¹²² *Centesimus annus*, n. 3.

¹²³ Rev 3:20.

¹²⁴ Mt 25:34f.

CHAPTER IV: ADDRESSES TO GENERAL AND OTHER AUDIENCES

Praying fervently that the Lord will enlighten the efforts of all on behalf of the poorest and most needy, I bless you with all my heart, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.