THE DIGNITY OF WORK

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December 7, 1991  Rome

Christian Witness/Mission, Service.

In the title of your Association, I read an addition that is also significant: “for the cult of their Holy Patron”; and I know that, in fact, you promote every year a worthy celebration in honor of St. Martin de Porres in the church of the Dominican Fathers in Milan.

Profession as Service

I wish, therefore, not only to thank you for your presence, but to express to you my satisfaction at the attachment you show in this way to the Christian faith, and, I would like to say, to faithfulness to the faith, at a time in which the dangers and temptations of belief have become, unfortunately, more serious. This importance that the religious element takes on within your Association deserves, in fact, praise and encouragement on the part of the Holy Church: in addition to guarding and protecting the legitimate interests of the profession, you have at heart the Christian formation of all its members, in order that the influence of faith may be felt, positive and exemplary, also in life. The very choice of a humble and great figure, such as that of St. Martin, who blossomed in the New World as a flower fragrant with virtue, reminds you and at the same time recommends you always to behave in consistent and shining faithfulness to Christian values. It reminds you, in particular, that your profession is essentially a service: just as your heavenly Patron, in the wide choice of his services (he was, according to the customs of his time, barber, nurse, doctor, and chemist), always kept in mind “his neighbor” and loved him so much, according to the matchless lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan, so you, too, in the daily relations you have with brothers, must try to serve them with simplicity, kindly manners, and, above

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1 This material was delivered as an address on June 16, 1980 in Rome, to members of the Italian Union of Hairdressers for the Cult of their Holy Patron Saint Martin de Porres. The translation was taken from L'Osservatore Romano, July 14, 1980, p. 17.

2 Lk 10:5-37.
all, with that fundamental attitude which respects the supreme causes of good and uprightness.

**Personal Contribution to the Elevation of Morals**

Each of you, in the variety of circumstances, and in the ways and forms in which you carry out concretely your typical professional work, must have the constant concern to follow this line of moral rectitude and thus offer a personal contribution to the elevation of morals. The Church expects a great deal from you too - from each of you individually and from all of you as members of your Union: a convincing demonstration of Christianity put into practice. I will say even more: she expects a clear testimony of love for Christ and, therefore, of love for brothers.

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38.

**ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN OUR DAILY LIVES**

*Work and Prayer.*

Since we are celebrating Holy Mass, we must glean from the Liturgy of the Word the teaching adapted to our life. We have just read in the Gospel according to Luke the episode of the hospitality given to Jesus by Martha and Mary. These two sisters, in the history of Christian spirituality, have been understood as symbolic figures, representing action and contemplation respectively: Martha is bustling around with household tasks, while Mary is sitting at Christ’s feet to listen to his words. We can draw two lessons from this Gospel text.

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3 This material was presented as a homily on July 7, 1980 at Castel Gandolfo, Italy, to the employees at the Papal summer residence. The translation was taken from *L’Osservatore Romano*, August 25, 1980, p.18.
Making Room for the World of the Spirit

First of all we should note the final sentence of Jesus: “Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.” In this way he strongly emphasizes the fundamental and irreplaceable value that listening to the Word of God has for our existence: it must be our constant reference point, our light, and our strength. But it is necessary to listen to it.

It is necessary to know how to keep silent to make room for solitude, or rather for a meeting reserved for intimacy with the Lord. It is necessary to be able to contemplate.

Today man deeply feels the need of not limiting himself to mere material concerns, and of integrating his own technical culture with superior and purifying contributions coming from the world of the spirit. Unfortunately our everyday life risks or even experiences cases, more or less widespread, of interior pollution. But the contact of faith with the word of the Lord purifies us, elevates us, and restores energy to us.

Therefore, we must always keep before our heart’s eyes the mystery of love, with which God came to meet us in his son, Jesus Christ. The object of our contemplation is entirely here, and from here comes our salvation, redemption from every form of alienation and above all from that of sin. Essentially, we are invited to act like the other Mary, the mother of Jesus, who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.”⁴ It is on this condition that we shall not be men of one dimension, but right in the very greatness of God.

Complementarity of Action and Contemplation

But there is a second lesson to learn: and it is that we must never see a contradiction between action and contemplation. In fact we read in the Gospel that it was Martha (and not Mary) who received Jesus “into her house.” Moreover, today’s First Reading suggests to us the harmony between the two things: the episode of the hospitality given by Abraham to the three mysterious persons sent by the Lord, who according to an ancient interpretation are actually an image of the Holy Trinity, teaches us that we can serve the Lord and be in contact with him even with our most trivial everyday tasks. And since this year is the Fifteenth Centenary of the birth of St. Benedict, let us recall his famous motto: “Pray and work,” Ora et labora! These words

⁴ Lk 2:19.
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contain a whole program: not of opposition but of synthesis, not of contradiction but of the fusion of two equally important elements.

The result is a very concrete lesson for us which can be expressed as a question: to what extent are we able to see in contemplation and prayer a moment of real impact for our daily tasks? And, vice versa, to what extent are we able to strengthen our work to its very core with a leavening communion with the Lord? These questions can serve as an examination of conscience and become a stimulus for a renewal of our daily life, which will be at the same time more contemplative and more active.

While we now continue the celebration of Holy Mass, we offer these resolutions of ours to the Lord, and above all we invoke his powerful grace, so that he may help us to put them into practice in the reality of our lives.

39.

Human Work Unites Humanity and Participates in the Creative Activity of God


Beloved friends, the very name of the Gran Sasso once—but now no longer—described a chain that “divided” your noble region, according to the classical topographical and administrative division of Abruzzo citerione (Near Abruzzi) and Abruszzo ulteriore (Transappennine Abruzzi). Thanks to human work, which has been going on right here for a good many years and has “triumphed” over the most arduous difficulties of a geological and technical nature, the old “division” can now be considered overcome; and not only in the sense of soon being able to have road connections that are increasingly easy and quick, but from the ethnic and ethical point of view, in the very important and far more significant sense of a further growth in knowledge, in trade, in the mutual relations of collaboration between the populations of this and the neighboring regions.
Work Overcomes Divisions

Friends and brothers who are listening to me! I have come to this place to honor and to celebrate work, and not according to the model of a vague and rhetorical exaltation, but in its actual value, that is in its capacity and its “virtue” of being changed into a positive contribution to better understanding and to true fellowship among men. A source of material and moral life, work finds precisely here a convincing and eloquent proof of its nature and irreplaceable function, which God the creator assigned to it “from the beginning” and which the Apostle reaffirms forcefully. Here it presents itself, moreover, not as an element of struggle and conflict, but of union and concord within society.

Nature as the Work of God

But in order that the subject may be clarified even better, I wish to refer now to the two forms of work, or rather to the two categories of workers, whom I see represented here. I cannot confine myself to saying that I want to honor your human work: I must, rather, address you directly, dear miners, and dear farmers and shepherds, who have gathered to greet me and pay your respects to me.

How could I forget your persons in fact, if as the Second Vatican Council wrote with words so easy to understand—hic labor . . . a persona immediate procedit (work proceeds from the human person)? And how could I forget your professions, with the sacrifices and difficulties, uncertainties and dangers they entail? Certainly, there are evident differences in the type of work you carry out: you miners have worked and work, in the bowels of the earth, digging and penetrating it with a lasting and intense effort, which unfortunately is not exempt from risks to health itself; you farmers and shepherds, on the contrary, usually work in the open air, following the normal succession of the seasons. Yet, to both of you—here is an element in common—it is always nature that appears in its reality as God’s creature. Working on the earth, outside or inside, you have always before you a work that can, and certainly does, offer you a whole series of reasons to reflect, to meditate, to worship. It has rightly been written that man is a religious being (animal religiosum); but it seems to me that those who, like you, live in daily contact with nature and discover it as an admirably ordered totality in its threefold mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdom, feel not so much the

6 2 Thess 3:7-12.
7 Gaudium et spes, n. 67.
opportunity, but the facility, I would say, and as it were the invitation, to consider and contemplate in it the almighty and providential work of God, our Creator and our Father. You specifically, because of what you are and what you do, engaged either in the hard toil of digging in the mine or in the tasks of farming and sheep-raising by day and by night, always remember that you must be “ideally” religious spirits, open and attentive to recognize those vestiges that divine Wisdom has left, as numerous as they are evident, in the created world. “For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature—Holy Scripture warns us—and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists, nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works; . . . for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”

I wish, therefore, to appeal to your feelings as believers, or better, to your faith as Christians, in order that this faith, far from failing, may rather find in the very activity you carry out, an opportunity and a cause for deepening and growth.

**Human Work: Collaboration with the Creator**

The last souvenir-thought of today’s meeting springs from the things I have said up to now, and is a kind of comparison between them. Here, in the grandeur of the Appennine heights, everything speaks to us of the work of God; but here, too—I added in the presence of you workers—everything speaks to us of the work of man. Is there, therefore, a connection between these two works? Certainly there is: God creates in the originality of an operation from nothingness, which makes things exist that did not previously exist; man, on the contrary, transforms, intervenes in—by divine mandate—created things, rising in this way to the rank and to the honor of a collaborator of the Creator himself. Look at your work from this standpoint too: alongside the above-mentioned motive of contemplation, give it this further dimension, thinking that its dignity is a humble and modest, but actual and real, participation in the transcendent dignity of divine work.

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8 Wis 15:1,5.
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40. WORK IS A SERVICE OF LOVE*

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God.

You have assumed important tasks, often attended by serious difficulties, owing to the vast range of the problems involved, and above all to man’s recurrent moral weakness in tackling them. In a society marked by deep ambiguities, straining, on the one hand, towards better conditions of civil society, but subjected, on the other hand, to a productive effort that risks being centered entirely on an ideal of mere material prosperity, excluding the perspectives and requirements of a human, spiritual, and supernatural order, your movement wishes to affirm within the world of work, the presence of Christ, the vitality of Christ. He is now, in fact, “at work in the hearts of men by the power of his Spirit; not only does he arouse in them a desire for the world to come, but he quickens, purifies, and strengthens the generous aspirations of mankind to make life more humane and conquer the earth for this purpose.”

Christian Mission to the World

You wish to bear witness to this presence, at once redemptive, revolutionary and peaceful, and to live it in the first place in yourselves, by a precise effort of reflection on the reality that surrounds you, and on its requirements, for an evangelical understanding and interpretation thereof. This may be reached also in confrontation and in dialogue, carried out with lucid awareness of one’s own faith, with other organized groups. Your task, therefore, assumes the form of Christian animation of the world of work and as evangelizing action within the forces that determine, at the present historical moment, the composition and increase of the workers movement.

Work in its Spiritual Dimension

The Pope encourages you in this difficult but also exalting service of believers, aimed essentially at making people understand how human work, as the expression of

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9 This material was delivered as an address on December 6, 1980 in Rome, to the Third National Congress of the Workers’ Christian Movement. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, January 19, 1981, p. 18.

10 Gaudium et spes, n. 38.
man’s creative capacities, beyond its evident productive aspect, is set in the perspective of the original Covenant between God and man himself, a Covenant renewed in Jesus Christ. Work, in this supreme light, while it is a means of improving the world and collaborating in God’s work of creation, helps man to be more man, matures his personality, develops and elevates his capacities, thus opening him to service, generosity, and commitment for others, in a word, to love.

The definitive meaning of work is contained in this availability with regard to brothers, that is, in practical exercise of the great commandment of love,\textsuperscript{11} which is the fundamental law of human perfection and therefore also of the laborious transformation of the universe.\textsuperscript{12} The Word of God, who became the Son of Man, and the anniversary of whose birth we are about to celebrate with joy, by giving his life for us, won for us the grace of exercising that love which is the soul and principal incentive of human work.

41.

WORK DERIVES ITS TRUE MEANING FROM THE GOSPEL\textsuperscript{13}


Before meeting you here all together, I was able to visit at least some sections of this large factory, which is your place of work. I am at once pleased and honored to have been able to view close at hand the bench of your daily toil; to have met you personally, you who constantly spend the best of your days, in fact of your lives, at this work-bench; and to have been able in this way to realize from actual experience how

\textsuperscript{11} Jn 13:14.

\textsuperscript{12} Gaudium et spes, n. 38.

\textsuperscript{13} This material was delivered as an address on March 19, 1981 in Terni, Italy, to workers of Terni. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, March 30, 1981, pp. 5, 6, 7.
heavy your occupation is, but also how productive it is and therefore how much it deserves to be appreciated, sustained and safeguarded.

**Work Promotes Civilization**

I realize that my visit was limited to only part of a far vaster industrial complex. And I know that it has an important place in Italy, with its specific productions of cold-rolled steel, rotors for turbines, machinery for the oil, chemical, cement, mechanical and structural work industries, and also of various parts for nuclear reactors, casts, pressure pipes, pressure vessels, and rods. The work in question is certainly heavy but important, and it calls for special responsibility. At the same time, it is very interesting and highly useful. In fact, it meets certain necessities typical of advanced modern technology in all its components and specializations; and this is in turn geared to the greater good of mankind. In this way, therefore, your work is useful for all men, facilitates their lives, and raises the level of civilization.

Well, I have seen you at grips with this toil: I have noted what is the origin of many instruments which serve the welfare of man, but of which he does not always know the hard price. I have seen you, and my esteem and affection for you has grown. For this reason, I pay tribute to you, with full understanding!

**Work Gives Meaning to Life**

Your work-bench, dear workers of Terni and Umbria, is, moreover, similar to that of so many other men who, in different parts of the world, contribute day after day to the common good of the whole of society. And this simple fact concerning the universal and inseparable relationship between man and his work-bench leads us to see in these two poles, and above all in their mutual combination, an exalting creative possibility. Man, in fact, draws from his own intelligence and from matter, which is subjected to him, albeit by means of toil and the sweat of his brow, new and unsuspected products, small or gigantic, which are the documentation of his individual and social dignity. It is at his work-bench that man offers the measure of his own capacities and that, when all is said and done, he gives content and even meaning to his own life.

**The Work of St. Joseph**

While I was visiting your factory, so modern and mechanized, there took shape before my inner eye another work-bench, a very modest, artisan’s one, directly
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connected with the family life of the home. It is the work-bench of Nazareth, at which St. Joseph worked every day. Today, as you know, is his feast day. But above all there grew up beside him, as the years passed, Jesus Christ himself, who helped him with the same work. And his fellow-townsmen spoke of him as the “carpenter’s son,” as we read in the Gospel according to Matthew. 14

Well, dear brothers and sisters, I am very grateful to you for having invited me to Terni, to your work-bench, precisely on this day when the Church celebrates Joseph of Nazareth. Your bishop, several months ago already, had proposed to me to visit Terni sometime. And since I have known Mons. Quadri well since the time of the Council, I could not refuse his request. I am glad that 19 March was chosen for this visit and that it can take place at your place of work itself. I think it allows us to venerate and understand St. Joseph more fully. At the same time, it is possible for us to re-read together and in depth this Gospel of work, which precisely today, seems to be particularly expressive. It speaks, with all the depth of scriptural revelation, of the Word of God. And at the same time it enters human life with great simplicity: the life of Christ, Joseph and Mary; the life of all men and women engaged in work.

The Gospel of Work

The gospel of work was written particularly by the fact that the Son of God, of the same substance as the Father, on becoming a man, worked with his hands. In fact, his work, which was real physical work, occupied most of his life on this earth, and in this way entered the work of the redemption of man and of the world, which he accomplished with his earthly life itself.

So I was very happy to see at the entrance the statue of Jesus the Divine Worker: he is at home in your midst, because Jesus Christ knows by experience what work is. Work, moreover, has its beginning in God himself. If we open the Bible, we immediately find at the beginning of the Book of Genesis the description of the creation of the world. Well, though it is a question of a figurative description, rich in images, the work of creation is presented according to the pattern of a working week: God-Elohim carries out his work in the course of six days, and “rests” on the seventh. In this way, man is given the indication of connecting work with rest. In fact, there is a mutual conditioning between work and rest. This principle, which today occupies one of the principal places in the present-day codes of work, in the policy and above all the ethics of work, is already contained in Holy Scripture at the very beginning of the existence of the world.

14 Mt 13:55.
Work: The Image and Likeness of God

The biblical narrative of creation—an activity which only God can carry out and which is presented in the likeness of human work—has a deep motivation of its own. It is not only a literary means of expression, but is impressed on the whole logic of the Word of God. In the same Book, in fact, we read that man, placed in the visible world as the culmination of the work of creation, was created in the image of God: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”15 For this reason, in the whole visible world it is only man who “works.” Only his activity can be called “work” in the full sense of the word. On the contrary, the activity of the beings inferior to man, “animals,” is not “work,” even if it is sometimes called so. The fact is that in order to “work,” physical ability and strength, which are characteristic of these beings as well, are not sufficient; and if man wishes to use this specific strength of animals in his work, he must “domesticate” them. The same thing holds true for the other forces hidden in nature. Man must “adapt” them, raise them, in a way, to his own level. But for “work,” man is necessary. To be able to “work,” one must be the “image and likeness” of God.16

Work, therefore, is not at all a servile occupation, reserved for slaves, as was believed in the ancient world and later, but it is characteristic of free men. In fact, it is an expression of creative freedom, in which man offers the measure of his own capacity of collaborating in creation itself.

The Dignity of Human Work

This short reflection already speaks to us of the dignity of work, in fact of the specific dignity of human work. It derives its own foundation from nothing else but the very humanity that carries it out. This truth is at the very center of the “gospel of work.” And the Church has proclaimed it since the beginning of her existence, already from that simple house in Nazareth. She proclaims it daily. The 19th of March, furthermore, offers a special opportunity to speak about it and to live it together with all workers. Precisely in the present year it is possible to do so in a special way. This year, in fact, is the ninetieth anniversary of the Encyclical Rerum novarum, the first social encyclical of the Church, published by my predecessor Pope Leo XIII in 1891. At the center of his message is the truth about the dignity of work, a truth which constituted the foundation of the whole morality of work. Every code of work should be built on it, if it wishes to have a really “humanitarian” and “social” character. That

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15 Gen 1:27.
16 Gen 1:26.
encyclical confirmed this teaching, without espousing any party ideology or theory which, albeit of opposite sign, is marked by materialism, that is, by the reduction of man to only one dimension, the economic one, which deprives him of the highest element of his dignity as a human person and son of God.

Well, today as yesterday, the Pope and the whole Church intend to be at the side of those who believe in man, because they believe in something or in someone that transcends him, in such a way as to reaffirm and promote all the values of the whole man, without stifling any.

Putting Belief into Action

And certainly this fundamental ethics is not honored when work becomes a means of exploiting man, a pretext for excessive profits, an opportunity for injustice on a small or large scale. The Council, too, expressed itself in this way: “The entire process of productive work must be accommodated to the needs of the human person and the nature of his life, with special attention to domestic life. . . . Workers should have the opportunity to develop their talents and their personalities in the very exercise of their work.” Work must help man to be more of a man. But no one can grant himself the luxury of dreaming only, if he does not then try to put the highest ideals into practice. Woe if all these things remain only words, or just good intentions. Society must show, on the contrary, that it has acquired this truth, and show it concretely, with the same concreteness that qualifies everyday working activity.

The Church and the Gospel of Work

Dear brothers and sisters, speaking in Poland during my pilgrimage in 1979, I said that the Church is not afraid of the difficult problems connected with the world of work: “Christianity and the Church are not afraid of the world of work. The Pope is not afraid of the men of work. They have always been particularly close to him. He came from among them. He came from the stone quarries of Zakrzowek, from the Solvey boilers in Borek Falecki, then from Nova Huta. Through all these environments, through his own experiences of work—I venture to say—the Pope learned the Gospel anew. He realized and became convinced how deeply the modern problems of human work are engraved in the Gospel. How impossible it is to solve them thoroughly without the Gospel.”

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17 Gaudium et spes, n. 67.

18 Address on June 29, 1979, in the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross at Mogile.
But it is necessary to say more: that is, that the Church cannot be extraneous to, or far from, these difficult problems; she cannot break away from the “world of work,” precisely because the “gospel of work” is organically inscribed in her mission as a whole. And the Church cannot but proclaim the Gospel. Therefore she cannot but go forth to meet every man, and especially the man of work. In fact, as I wrote in *Redemptor hominis*, “For the Church all ways lead to man.”¹⁹

Although the attempt is being made in various quarters to create opposite opinions and sustain them at all costs, the Church has so many things to say to the man of work. Certainly not in technical, professional or similar questions, but in fundamental questions. And it is an important word. If it is lacking and if it is not put into practice, then the real “cornerstone” of the whole gigantic construction of modern technology, industry, and the various sectors with which human work is connected is lacking.

**Need for Internal Conversion**

The frequent appeal of the Church to conversion, like the appeal of Jesus, is based on the certainty that nothing will improve, not even the structures of human society, if man does not improve from within; and, in practice, that means that it is impossible to obtain justice by creating new injustices, to establish peace by having recourse to violence, to create greater spaces of freedom by using physical or moral coercion.

It is not a good thing, therefore, to try to exclude the Church and the gospel of work. The cause of man suffers as a result. Moreover, it is precisely through work that man aspires to the development and to the maturing of everything that is human. I repeat to you what I said in France last year to the workers of Saint-Denis: “Christ will say one day: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.’”²⁰ However, this thirst for righteousness, this eagerness to struggle for truth and moral order in the world, are not and cannot be hate, or a source of hate in the world. They cannot be turned into a program of struggle against man, solely because he is, if one may so express it “on the other side.” This struggle cannot become a program of destruction of the adversary, it cannot create social and political mechanisms in which there are manifested ever greater forms of collective egoism, powerful and destructive egoism.”


²⁰ Mt 5:6.
Apostolate of Work

In this way, therefore, I wish to express the conviction that this visit today will strengthen and consolidate your encounter with the gospel of work. I hope that it will bring the great bench of modern work, at which thousands of men work here in Terni, closer to that modest bench of the carpenter Joseph of Nazareth, to whom Jesus Christ, the son of God and the son of man, presented himself as a worker. And I hope that in this perspective you will be able to see in a fuller light the value and the meaning of your work and of your whole lives.

I am here today to give one and all confidence. In particular, I am here also to encourage that apostolate of work, which is already being carried out in an intelligent way by the bishop and his zealous collaborators. I liked what was written on the booklet published to prepare for this visit: the world of work is not to be considered “an area to be colonized, but a place from which there spring the strongest challenges for a Christian witness, which cannot remain helpless and passive before the historical tasks of realizing for man, for every working man, an environment of justice and peace, which do not bar him from human and Christian growth.” Be men who are able to bear such witness, and who are Christians not only when it is convenient, but always and completely. I also saw with interest the results of an inquiry carried out by the interdiocesan Commission for the apostolate of work, from which there emerge data which stimulate to ever greater commitment. I likewise express my appreciation for the institute of Theological and Social Studies, and for the various lay organizations.

I would like to exhort everyone to continue with impetus and generosity in the valuable task of bringing the fresh and regenerating breath of the Gospel and of adherence to Christ more and more abundantly into environments of work. And may the Lord generously reward the work of everyone.

Prayer for Workers

Brothers and sisters, I thank you again heartily for the welcome you have given me, and I will certainly keep in my heart the memory of you all, of your industriousness and hospitality. Rest assured that the Pope is with you, not out of opportunism, but with sincere and deep sentiments of human and Christian communion.

While I wish you all happiness, I am thinking not only of your work, but also of the difficulties it involves; I am thinking of your families, your children and your sick. I bless everyone and take everyone with me in my heart, invoking the most abundant heavenly graces upon each one.
I pray to God ardently for the happiness of all:

— that your just aspirations may be realized;
— that the moments and the reasons of crisis will be overcome;
— that work will never be an alienation for anyone;
— that, on the contrary, it may be honored by everyone as it deserves, so that justice and even more love may triumph in it;
— that the environment of work will really be fit for man, and that man may be able to appreciate it as an extension of his own family;
— that work may help man to be more of a man;
— and that, with the commitment of everyone, it may be possible to arrive at the construction of a new society and a new world, in the full realization of justice, freedom and peace.

42. THE WORLD OF WORK SHOULD BE MOLDED NOT ONLY BY JUSTICE, BUT ALSO BY CHARITY


What I wish to reaffirm here is that I feel I am one with you, because I feel I participate in your problems, having shared them personally. I consider it a grace of the Lord to have been a worker, because this gave me the opportunity to know firsthand the man of work, but also of every other type of work. I have been able to

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21 This material was delivered as an address on March 19, 1982 in Solvay, Italy, to the workers of the Solvay chemical factory. The translation was taken from L'Osservatore Romano, April 5, 1982, pp. 9-11.
know the concrete reality of his life; an existence imbued with profound humanity, even if it is not immune to weaknesses, a simple life, hard, difficult, worthy of every respect.

**Experience of Work**

When I left the factory to pursue my vocation to the priesthood, I brought with me the irreplaceable experience of that world and the profound dignity of human friendship and vibrant solidarity with my fellow workmen, keeping these things in mind as something precious.

**Proclaiming the Dignity of Work**

Dear brothers and sisters! The Church, by virtue of her divine mandate, is near you; she is on your side, because she is on the side of man, of every man. The centrality and the dignity of the human person urge the pope and the bishops to proclaim their concern for the world of work. The Church has much to say to the man of work: not in technical matters but in fundamental questions and in the defense of workers' rights. She proclaims that the dignity of work is part of the dignity of man; and in protecting the dignity of work she can contribute positively to the defense of social justice. And if the achieved results, just reason for your pride, do not escape her, she then knows too well the “anxieties” and the dangers which they cost.

**Labor and Technology**

As workers in the industrial sector, you are part of the mechanism of modern labor which the inventive power of human genius has magnified. At the same time, however, you are exposed to the most exciting and the most dangerous consequences of this process, not only from the economic-social point of view but also the ethical-religious one.

The development of technology poses again in a new way today the problem of human work. Technology, in fact, which has been and is a coefficient of economic progress, can be changed from an ally to an adversary of man. In fact, it appears marked by an evident ambivalence: on the one hand, it has lengthened man’s toil and has multiplied economic goods through massive production. However, on the other, with the mechanization of productive processes, it in fact tends to depersonalize the one who performs the work, taking away from him every satisfaction and every incentive to creativity and responsibility. In industrial activity we meet, in effect, two
realities: man and matter, the hand and the machine, business structures and the life of the worker. Which will have pre-eminence? Will the machine become an extension of man's creative mind and hand or will man be subjected to the impelling mechanisms of organization, reducing him to acting as a robot? Will matter emerge ennobled by the workshop and man instead degraded? Isn't man worth more than the machine and its products?

It is known how the technical industrial era has fostered profound innovations, radical changes in society. The presence of the machine in the world of enterprise has changed not only the traditional configurations of work but has had a substantial effect on the worker's kind of life, on his psychology, his mentality, conscience, and on the very culture of the people, giving rise to a new type of society.

With the emphasis, then, on the scientific organization of work and the consequent assembly lines, there is greatly accentuated the situation of the alienation of man and his impossibility to participate responsibly in the work that he carries out.

Moreover, in recent decades, automation has made its entrance into the field of industry. Automation, whose innovative character, based on electronics and computers, is not always completely in favor of man.

**Growing Awareness of Human Dignity**

In the modern age, the awareness that human beings, especially working men and women, are acquiring about their dignity is taking on universal dimensions. This phenomenon has been expressed on the historical level not only through the progressive proclamation and defense of human rights but also through the profound desire for a more live and concrete social justice.

It is not difficult to notice how from every part of our planet there arises today the aspiration to a greater justice, in connection with the new conditions of economy and the new possibilities of technology, of the production and distribution of goods. The perception and need of this justice are always made more insistent and sad in the human conscience, which if it recognizes on the one hand the results achieved, on the other hand it suffers more acutely the anxieties caused by discriminations and privations, which can harm the legitimate aspirations of workers.

**Social Justice**

In effect, social justice, in the Christian vision, constitutes the basis, the key
virtue and the fundamental value of socio-political society. It directs and regulates the connections and relationships of citizens toward the common good, in a viewpoint, therefore, that is not purely contractual and individual, but communitarian. As such, it represents a fundamental right of all men, conferred on them by the Creator and confirmed by the gospel message.

Overcoming the rigid limitations of commutative justice, social justice, therefore, seeks to subordinate things to man, individual goods to the common good, the right to property to the right of life, eliminating every condition of existence and of work that is unworthy of the human person.

Here we are, then, brothers and sisters, at the central point of the problem to which today’s meeting of ours is dedicated.

A Human Economy

I will never tire of affirming that the economy and its structures are valid and acceptable only if they are human, that is, made by man and for man. And they cannot be such if they undermine the dignity of those—workers and directors—who carry on their activities; if they systematically erode in them the sense of responsibility; if they paralyze in them any form of personal initiative whatsoever; if, in short, they do not possess a human meaning and logic.

I now wish to refer to some elements that I consider essential for the social order to be truly inspired by justice in regard to human work.

In a society that wants to be just and human, profit and gain cannot prevail over man. It is absolutely necessary that man remain the subject of the economy and the various structures of production. I wrote in *Redemptor hominis*: man “cannot relinquish himself or the place in the visible world that belongs to him; he cannot become the slave of things, the slave of economic systems, the slave of production, the slave of his own products.” The God has created him to be the master and not the slave of work.

Right to Work

In this demand for justice, we must include the right to work and the other rights of workers.

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22 *Redemptor hominis*, n. 16.
Work, in fact, constitutes one of the great and fundamental inalienable rights of man, because it gives him life, serenity, meaning. Through work, people become more fully human and God’s collaborator in perfecting nature. It is to be wished that this right truly represents a concrete reality for every citizen, a right promoted and protected by society.

To procure work or a position is not an easy task; yet it is necessary to affirm that this is a central aspect and a fundamental obligation of the political and economic order.

A Just Salary

I wrote in *Laborem exercens* that the “concrete proof of the justice of the whole socio-economic system and its proper functioning is represented by a just salary.” In effect, the most consistent way to realize justice in work relations between the worker and the employer, independent of the type of economic system in which human activity is carried out, is that of just remuneration.

Through the salary, in fact, the concrete access to goods destined for common use is generally opened. To adapt the salary in its multiple and complementary forms, so as to be able to affirm that the worker really and equitably shares in the wealth he jointly helps to create both in private enterprise and in the national economy, is a postulate and a requirement of a sound economy at the service of an effective social justice.

Worker as Co-Owner

The implementation of the proposals put forward in the Catholic field in order to ensure that the worker be considered a co-owner of the great workbench is a basic element of that proof to which I have already referred: not only that the man of work find full satisfaction in his aspiration to just remuneration, but also and above all that justice be safeguarded in all the structures of the economic process.23

Rights and Responsibilities of Labor Unions

Again I wish to draw your attention to another essential aspect of social justice, and that is the freedom of association, through which there must be recognized for

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workers the effective possibility to participate freely and actively in making and controlling the decisions which concern them, at all levels. The experience of history—as I have already stated on other occasions—shows that these associations or unions are an indispensable element of social life, especially in the modern industrialized society. Having arisen to defend the just rights of workers with regard to the owners of the means of production, the trade unions, particularly those in the industrial sector, have increased on the basis of the struggle. Nevertheless, in their attitudes of social opposition, they must give essential prominence to the positive values that inspire them, to the desire for the just good, in the context of the common good, to the thirst for social justice, but never to the struggle “against” others, because the first characteristic of work is that of being “for,” of uniting many men; and here it is of great social strength. It is precisely through union and solidarity that the trade unions have been able to protect the interests of workers by obtaining a just salary, dignified work conditions, security for the worker and his family.

The public powers, called to serve the common good, must, therefore, consider it their duty to protect these associations in the civil sphere through wise laws. On their part, the trade unions must always adequately realize the limitations that the general concrete economic situation can sometimes demand in the framework of the common good of the whole nation.

Justice Needs Charity

All of you, dear brothers and sisters, rightly desire that in your work yards, in your factories, justice reign as the fundamental dimension of your work activities. Isn’t this so? This does you honor, but it certainly is not enough! From the world of your work must also spring the solution for realizing social justice: newer movements of solidarity among men of work and with men of work are necessary to create a union of hearts, a constructive union, sincere, inspired by moral formation and a spirit of responsibility.

“The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions. . . . This statement does not detract from the value of justice and does not minimize the significance of the order that is based upon it; it only indicates, under another aspect, the need to draw from the power of the spirit which conditions the very order of justice, powers which are still more profound.”

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24 *Dives in misericordia*, n. 12.
You know, in fact, that Christian love animates justice, inspires it, discovers it, perfects it, makes it feasible, respects it, elevates it, surpasses it, but it does not exclude it, does not absorb it, does not replace it, but rather presupposes it and demands it, because true love, true charity, does not exist without justice. Is not justice perhaps the minimum measure of charity?

I listened attentively to the worker who spoke at the beginning of this meeting. She emphasized very well the need to search in love for the inspiration for a fuller social commitment. I think this perception is important. If, in fact, social justice gives a human countenance to enterprise, charity pours into it the vital energy of true solidarity.

The Gospel of Work

Dearest brothers and sisters, I nourish confidence that this meeting today will strengthen in each one of you sincere attachment to the Gospel of work proclaimed by the one who, being the Son of God made man, wanted to belong to the world of manual labor at the bench of Joseph the carpenter, the spouse of Mary Most Holy.

Jesus looks with love on our work, in its various forms, seeing in each one of them a reflection of man’s likeness to God the Creator. Work is willed and blessed by God: it no longer carries with itself the weight of condemnation, but the nobility of a mission, that of making man a protagonist with God in the building of human society and of the dynamism that reflects the mystery of the Almighty.

Giving Work a Soul

The Church looks on your work. Together with all men of good will, it seeks to validate the achieved “results” and to find the answer to the “anxieties” that are churning in your mind. Christian faith has the mysterious power to give work a soul, to confer on it serenity, peace, strength, rationality, thus making work an occasion of human growth that is not only personal, familial and communitarian, but also religious.

Work as an Expression of Love

And now allow me to address all of you who are taking part in this meeting—each and every one in particular. In doing this, I am at the same time thinking of your families, your babies, your children, your spouses, your mothers, your sick, and all of those who are dear to you. I know what place they have in your hearts; I know what
value they represent for you. Through them you find in the toil and work of every day the full expression and the spontaneous measure of your love.

Love your families! I repeat to you: love them! Be for them joyous guides, sure light, vigilant guardians against the seeds of moral and social disintegration, which unfortunately lead inexorably to the breakup of so many family nucleuses.

Family, Society, and Church

Open your families to social values, to the requirements of the spirit! Family life must be an experience of communion and participation. Far from withdrawing into itself, the family is called to open itself to the social environment to become—moved by the sense of justice, by concern for others, and by the duty of its responsibility toward the whole of society—an instrument for humanizing and personalizing, a service to neighbors through various expressions of fraternal help, a defense and conscious guardian of its own rights and duties.

Open your families to Christ and to His Church! It is not by chance that the Christian family has been called the “domestic Church.” Among its fundamental tasks there is the ecclesial one of being a witness for Christ to the world: “that is, it is placed at the service of the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church.”

Keep alive and consistent your sensitivity for the respect for social justice in the world of work, nourishing and sustaining it with the love that is “the bond of perfection.”

In your factories, in your places of work, may the serenity of the modest shop of Nazareth always reign, the serenity that comes from the knowledge that you have daily fulfilled your duty, the serenity that makes human work a growth factor and gives it the dimension of a fruitful vocation. The Church is greatly sensitive to the value of the factory environment, the place where the life of the worker—your life!—is lived, but also where you must bring the faith to have a positive influence, to make it become active.

25 Familiaris consortio, n. 49.

26 Col 3:14.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

God with Us

The Lord is here with us: not only now, He is always with you at your workbench to give to everyone the regenerating strength of his Gospel, of His grace and His love. Never ignore Him! Never put Him aside!

As a goal of your activity, always have that building a world that is more human, more fraternal, more Christian; the will to create more perfect forms of union, of solidarity, of sociality according to the requirements of the times; the ideal of growing in humanity, maturing more each day in justice and love.

43.

A COMMON EFFORT IS NECESSARY TO CONFRONT SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS


I would like at this moment to shake hands with all of you, to feel your hands, calloused as they are, as proof of your professional activity. When you shake hands with someone as a sign of friendship, you allow him to feel the weight and value of your work. Noble is the hand that works; the hand that transforms the world, the hand that builds a new reality for a more human society. Generous is the hand that works for the benefit of mankind.

27 This material was delivered as an address on May 15, 1982 in Porto, Portugal, to a group of workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, July 5, 1982, pp. 9, 10.
Value of Work

I have come to Porto to honor and celebrate work. I know very well that the people of this city and this region and all of Portugal have always felt proud of their earnestness in work and their devotion to work. I have been told that Porto is known locally as the “City of Work.” So what else could I do here but proclaim to you the Good News, the “Gospel of Work”?

In my recent encyclical on human work, for the 90th anniversary of Rerum novarum, the great document of Pope Leo XII on the social question, I wanted to pay special tribute to man seen in the full context of this reality which is work, in the light of the mystery of Christ, to reveal its richness and at the same time all that is arduous in human existence.

The Church, which believes in and thinks of man, considers it part of her mission “always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide the above-mentioned changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.”

The Worker Is the Goal of Work

In fact, according to the original designs of God, man is called to become lord of the earth, “to master it” by the superiority of his intelligence and the activity of his arms. He is the center of creation. The primary basis of the value of work—and therefore of its dignity—is man himself. The dignity of the person who works must be the basis and the criterion to keep in mind when evaluating any kind of manual or intellectual work. In reality the protagonist and the goal of work, its true creator and craftsman, even in the most humble and monotonous activities, is always man as a person. It is man who was created “in the image of God.”

Threat from Materialism and Technology

The growing materialistic civilization which is invading our world tends to relegate to second place the subjective dimension of work, based on the dignity of man. In this situation there is a danger that workers might become robots, faceless beings, a

28 Laborem exercens, n. 1.

29 Gen 1:28.
shapeless depersonalized mass, at the mercy of powerful forces that do not always respect the interests of the worker: the interests of man, the family, and the community.

The problem is not a new one, as you well know. The invention of the machine has certainly given a new dimension to human work. If the use of the instrument lengthened and strengthened the human arm, the machine tended to replace it. When he invented the machine, man hoped to remove the burden of muscular effort, to lighten his load.

Even if machines have improved the living conditions of the workers, after the first impact of novelty it became clear that mechanical precision and speed, greater every day, had begun a new condition of human life. It is the machine that imposes its rhythm upon man; there is no longer time for anything, nor for anyone, with all the problems that arise from this.

However, it should not be like that. Even when it is meant to improve this standard of living, to subject man, “created in the image of God,” to a productive effort, directed almost entirely towards material well-being and profit, shutting him off from the prospects of the human and spiritual order, it opposes his dignity.

Creating a More Human Conscience

If work is for man and not man for work, the gradual solution of the problems of the working world must be sought in the effort to create a conscience that is more just, more Christian, and more human.

Only with this conscience as a basis can we tackle the problems of the working world, beginning with the difficult and delicate problem of the relationship between capital and labor, between the owner and the work force, between the employer and the employee.

Need for Balance between Labor and Capital

We must not underestimate either side of the problem: without capital there is no work. Therefore the holders or providers of capital are performing a great service to the common good, which deserves everyone’s consideration and respect, because they create new possibilities of work and employment. On the other hand, human labor cannot be considered merely a function of capital. It completely transcends it. Man was not made for the machine but the machine for man.
The argument that the machines must never stop cannot be used to try to make man a slave to their rhythm, depriving him of the rest he deserves and of a really human way of life.

If, on the one hand, recent profound changes reveal a real will to create an ever more perfect climate of economic well-being and social justice, they cannot however hide the inevitable tensions, uncertainties, and weaknesses which sometimes accompany the search for solutions and adjustments following great changes in the socio-political order.

**Cooperation in the Common Good**

In these circumstances, each citizen has a duty to co-operate sincerely to build, with his serious and faithful work, an ever better national community, where social justice—the new name for the common good—is promoted, where personal dignity is at every moment respected. In the light of this common good must be judged the timeliness and justice of certain forms of demands, which while they seem to defend the legitimate interests of the workers, sometimes cause great damage to the whole community.

It is certain, dear workers, that you will never be able to obtain the best solution to your problems if each of you remains isolated. So that you can take part in the solution of social problems, you also have the right to form associations and unions, with the goal of defending the vital interests of the men employed in the different professions. Up to a certain point, these interests are common to all; but each work, each profession, has its own special characteristics, which should be reflected in these organizations. I refer as you know, to the unions.

**Peaceful Struggle for the Rights of All**

Catholic social teaching does not hold that unions are no more than a reflection of a “class” structure of society and that they are a mouth-piece for a class struggle, which inevitably governs social life. They are indeed a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions. However, this struggle, as I have already said in the aforementioned encyclical *Laborem exercens*, “should be seen as a normal endeavor for the just good: in the present case, for the good which corresponds to the needs and merits of working people associated by profession, but it is not a struggle “against others.”

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30 *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.
And so it is up to you to seek the solution to your problems. Never, however, with hatred or violence.

Christianity teaches us to love all men, even when we are defending our interests and we are involved in fighting a claim. We cannot think only of ourselves or of our own social group. Everything must be subordinate to the common good. It is not just or Christian for one class, because it has greater opportunities to exert pressure, due to the position it occupies in the social context, or because of the fighting strength that it has managed to achieve, to prevail over others, neglecting the legitimate rights of others.

**Common Effort to Reduce Unemployment**

Following this line of thought, there is, at the opposite pole, the situation of those who do not have the opportunity, and so are prevented from having a “voice”: the unemployed. “It is known that in our country”—your bishops wrote in a recent pastoral letter “there is a serious employment crisis, which is giving rise to intolerable situations, at the personal, family, and social levels.” I would like to make my own the words that they then added: “We must try everything to resolve or diminish this crucial problem as soon as possible. . . . It is an authentic, patriotic and moral imperative that all the forces concerned, putting aside all differences, recriminations and conflicts, should make one concerted effort for the rapid reduction of unemployment, and that the national community undertake this together. With this aim in mind, no one should consider himself free from the obligation to make the necessary sacrifices.”

**Desire to Work**

In these days there is a general aspiration to work. To work is to integrate oneself actively in the process of human development, and with this, also to feel useful in relation to others. This desire to participate in the great achievement of the community in which he belongs is a desire innate in the human individual. Everyone feels his own share of responsibility. In fact, every man who comes into this world must make his own real contribution to human progress in the sense of bringing this world closer to the true aspirations of mankind. For this reason the consideration of the subjective and social value of work demands that in the whole political community there is recognized not only the importance of work itself, but also of the right to work, and that everything be done to eliminate unemployment and underemployment.
Economic Surplus Tested by the Provision of a Fair Wage

Related in a certain way to this problem of unemployment is the problem of fair wage. Without ever forgetting that private ownership is always under a public mortgage, and so must always serve the common good, this is a suitable point to recall the criteria for establishing a just salary. This remains in every case the concrete test of any socio-economic system. But I am certain that it will not always be allowed to be given due attention. I do not doubt that we must confront another phenomenon which has assumed enormous proportions in different countries and especially in Portugal: emigration, with all its incidence, and linked with it the phenomenon of urbanism.

Work, Motherhood, and the Family

But I must now bring our talk to an end, dear brothers and sisters. And I do not want to do so without a special reference to your families. When I see you, men of work, I also think of those dear to you: your spouses, your mothers, your children and your sick. I think of all those who make up your homes. You, who exhaust yourselves at work to maintain your home and support your children, continue to be faithful to the traditional wholesome values of the Portuguese family. Continue to love your families because you also need your family. Do not let your work break up your family life. Do not let a certain life-style separate parents from children. Do not let your homes be simply a place for resting and eating. Be yourselves and the education of your children.

The mother occupies an important place in the home. The well-being of the family depends a great deal on her. May you not be forced, through lack of means or low wages, to sacrifice the time that would normally be dedicated at home to the education of the children. May your home never be the victim of inhuman situations. And if you must take a job outside the home, may you not sacrifice things more important or be drawn away from your home, your husband or your children!

Need for Inner Conversion

In conclusion I remind you once again of the great dignity of your work; I hope that you are never displeased with it. May you never succumb to easy demagogy, nor let yourselves be deluded by an ideology that is not open to the spiritual. You would be dreaming of a world less human, if you were to commit yourselves only to having more everyday. As men, as persons and as workers, I encourage you always to the ideal of being more.
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Poor in Spirit

I recall here, as on other occasions, the Gospel beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.” Those who have goods must open their hearts to the poor through an inner conversion, without which a just and stable social order will never be achieved. Those without goods must learn to live in poverty of spirit, so that material poverty will not deprive them of their human dignity, which is always more important than all possessions. In its most exalted and beautiful form, the “Gospel of Work” was written and proclaimed by Christ. He, being God, made himself like us in all things, except sin, and dedicated most of the years of his life on earth to manual labor, thus assuming labor and rest in the work of the Redemption which he came to bring about.

Dignity of Work

But in the mind of God, work “right from the beginning” was incorporated in the marvelous prospect, “Let us make man in our image and likeness” as we read at the beginning of Genesis. Do we not find here the first expression of the “Gospel of Work?” The reason for the dignity of labor lies in this divine “likeness.” So man, when he works, imitates God, his Creator, because only he bears within himself the likeness of God. To work, it is necessary to be man, to be a person; to work, it is necessary to be the “image” of God.

So it is that the dignity of work rests not only on its natural aspect but also on its spiritual dimension. It is certainly the prerogative of the person. It is a factor in human achievement and a service to the human community.

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31 Gen 1:26.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

44.

TRUE HUMAN PROGRESS DEPENDS ON RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF ALL WORK

In addressing you, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish first of all, through you, to pay tribute to human work, whatever its nature and wherever in the world it may be performed—a tribute to all work, and to each and every man or woman engaged in it, irrespective of its specific content and including “physical” as well as “intellectual” work; irrespective too, of its particular purpose, whether it be “creative” or “reproductive”; and irrespective of whether it consist of theoretical research providing a basis for the work of others, or an activity aimed at organizing the conditions and structure of such work or, again, the management or the actual performance, by workers, of the tasks involved in carrying out programs. Work in any of its forms deserves particular respect because it represents the output of a human being and because behind it there is always a live subject: the human person. That is the source of its value, and its dignity. . . .

Work: A Basic Dimension of Human Existence

The message which you expect from me, Ladies and Gentlemen, is bound to be no different from that which I delivered to other gatherings of representatives of the peoples of all nations: the General Assembly of the United Nations, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. My thinking aims at reflecting, in a coherent way, one fundamental idea and one basic preoccupation: the cause of man, his dignity and the inalienable rights flowing therefrom. Already in my first Encyclical Redemptor hominis, I stressed the fact that “man is the first road which the Church must travel in fulfilling its missions; it is the first road and the fundamental road of the Church, mapped out by Christ himself.” That is also the reason why, in celebrating the 90th anniversary of

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32 This material was delivered as an address on June 15, 1982 in Geneva, Switzerland, to the International Labor Organization. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, June 28, 1982, p. 10-12, 20.
Rerum novarum, I felt I should devote a major document of my papacy to human labor, to man at work—homo Laborem exercens. For not only does work bear the imprint of man, but it reveals to man the true meaning of his existence—work considered as a human activity regardless of its concrete content and circumstances. Work is endowed with this basic dimension of human existence through which man’s life is built up every day. From work “it delivers its specific dignity but at the same time contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering and also of the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level.”

Solidarity and Common Effort

The problems of work—problems that have repercussions in so many spheres of life and at all levels, whether individual, family, national or international—share one characteristic, which is at one and the same time a condition and a program, and which I would like to stress before you today: solidarity. I feel impelled to place these considerations before you partly because solidarity is inherent in one way or another in the very nature of human work, and also because of the objectives of your Organization and above all the spirit which imbues it. The spirit in which the International Labor Organization has carried out its missions since its foundation is a spirit of universalism, which rests on the fundamental equality of nations and the equality of men, and which is perceived both as the starting point and the point of arrival of any social policy. It is also a spirit of humanism, which seeks to develop all of man’s potentialities, both material and spiritual. Lastly, it is a community spirit, which is successfully reflected in your tripartite structure. At this juncture, I can only repeat the words pronounced here by Paul VI during his visit in 1969: “Your original and organic instrument is to bring together the three forces at work in the human dynamics of modern labor: men of government, employers and workers. And your method, that has become a model, is to harmonize these three forces, so that they do not oppose each other, but combine ‘in a courageous and fecund collaboration’ by means of constant dialogue for the study and solution of ever renewed and recurring problems.” The fact that the solution to the problems of work has been seen to lie in a commitment by all the parties involved, and in peaceful bargaining aimed at the well-being of man at his work and peace between societies, shows that you are conscious of the need for solidarity, which unites you in a common effort transcending the real differences that exist and the divisions that may always occur.

33 Librum exarum, n. 1.

34 Address to ILO, 10 June 1969, n. 15. AAS 61, p. 498.
Universal Significance of Work

This fundamental intuition which the founders of the International Labor Organization so strongly emphasized in the structure of the Organization itself and whose corollary is that the objectives it pursues can only be achieved through community and solidarity, reflects the reality of human work. For, in its fundamental characteristics, the reality of work is the same all over the world, in every country and in every continent; among men and women of every race and nation, who speak different languages and represent diverse cultures; among men and women who profess different religions or express their relationships with religion and with God in a variety of ways. The reality of work is the same behind a multiplicity of forms: manual work and brain work; work in farming and work in industry; work in the service sector and work in research; the work of the craftsman, the technician, the educator, the artist, or the housewife; the work of the factory operative and the work of the supervisors and managers. Without concealing the specific differences which remain and which often quite sharply differentiate the men and women performing these very varied jobs, work—the reality of work—unites all in an activity which has the same significance and the same source. For all, work is a necessity, a duty, a task. For each and every one, it is a way of assuring a livelihood, family life and certain fundamental values. In the diversity and universality of its forms, human work unites men because every man seeks in work “to realize his humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity.”\textsuperscript{35} Yes, “work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons.”\textsuperscript{36} Work bears the stamp of unity and solidarity.

Dominion over the Earth

Moreover, it is difficult—in dealing, before this Assembly, with such a vast, such a varied and at the same time such a universal subject as the work of the entire human family—not to hear in the depths of one’s heart the words of the Book of Genesis, in which work is given to man as a task so that he may subdue the earth and dominate it.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Laborem exercens, n. 6.

\textsuperscript{36} Laborem exercens, preamble.

\textsuperscript{37} Gen 1:28.
Work Belongs to the Realm of the Spirit

The fundamental reason why I single out the theme of solidarity lies therefore in the very nature of human work. The problem of work has a very profound link with that of the meaning of human life. Because of this link, work becomes and indeed is a problem of man’s spiritual nature. This observation in no way detracts from the other aspects of work, which one might say are more easily measurable and which are related to the various patterns and operations of an “external” character, arising out of the organization: this same observation indeed enables us to set human work, in whatever way it is performed by man, within man himself, in other words, in his innermost being, in the essence of his nature, in what makes him a man and therefore destined to work. The conviction that there is an essential link between the work of every man and the overall meaning of human existence is the whole foundation of the Christian doctrine of work— one might say the foundation of the “gospel of work”— and it permeates the teaching and activities of the Church, in one way or another, at each stage of its mission throughout history. “Never again will work be against the worker; but always work will be . . . in the service of man”— it is worth repeating today the words spoken in this same place in 1969 by Pope Paul VI.38 If work must always serve the welfare of man, if the program of progress can only be carried out through work, then there is a fundamental right to judge progress in accordance with the following criterion: does the work really serve man? Is it comparable with his dignity? Through it, does human life achieve fulfillment in all its richness and diversity?

True Human Progress

We have the right to conceive of human work in this way; and we also have a duty to do so. We have the right and the duty to consider man not according to whether or not he is useful in his work, but consider work in its relation to man, to each man, to consider work according to whether or not it is useful to man. We have the right and the duty to take account, in our approach to work, of the various needs of man, in the spheres of both the spirit and the body, and to take this approach to human work in each society and in each system, in areas where well-being prevails, and even more so, in areas where destitution is widespread. We have the right and the duty to take this approach to work in its relation to man—and not the reverse—as a fundamental criterion for assessing progress itself. For progress always requires an evaluation and a value judgment: one must ask whether a given progress is sufficiently “human” and at the same time sufficiently “universal,” whether it helps to level out unjust inequalities and to promote a peaceful future for the world; whether in the work

38 Address to ILO, 10 June 1969, n. 11, AAS 61, p. 495.
itself, fundamental rights are ensured, for each nation. In a word, one must constantly ask oneself whether the work helps to fulfill the meaning of human life. While seeking a reply to these questions when analyzing socio-economic process as a whole, one must not overlook the aspects and the content which form man’s inner self: the development of his knowledge and his awareness. The link between work and the very meaning of human existence bears constant witness to the fact that man has not been alienated from work, that he has not been enslaved. Quite the contrary, it confirms that work has become the ally of his humanity, which helps him to live in truth and freedom in a freedom built on truth which enables him to lead, in all its fullness, a life more worthy of man.

**Increased Solidarity**

Confronted with the blatant injustices arising out of the systems of the last century, workmen, especially in industry, reacted and thereby discovered not only their common poverty, but the strength that comes from concerted action. As victims of the same injustices, they combined in a joint effort. In my encyclical on human work, I called this reaction a “just social reaction;” this situation “caused the impetuous emergence of a great burst of solidarity between workers, first and foremost industrial workers. The call to solidarity and common action addressed to the workers—especially to those engaged in narrowly specialized, monotonous and depersonalized work in industrial plants, where the machine tends to dominate man—was important and eloquent from the point of view of social ethics. It was the reaction against the degradation of man as the subject of work. . . . This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity.”

Despite subsequent improvements, despite the greater and more effective respect for workers’ fundamental rights in many countries, various systems based on ideology and on power have allowed flagrant injustices to persist or have created new ones. Moreover, the enhanced awareness of social injustice which, because of their geographical extent or contempt for the inalienable dignity of the human person, are nothing less than challenges to mankind. The need today is to forge a new solidarity based on the true significance of human work. For it is only through a just concept of work that it will be possible to define the objectives of this solidarity and the various forms it should take.

**Justice for All**

The world of work, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the world of all the men and all the women who, through their efforts, are trying to respond to the call to dominate the

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39 *Laborem exercens*, n. 8.
earth for the benefit of all. The solidarity of the world of work will therefore be a solidarity that broadens horizons to include not only the interests of individuals and particular groups but the common good of society as a whole, whether nationally, internationally or worldwide. It will be a solidarity for work, manifesting itself in the struggle for justice and for the truth of social life. For what justification would there be for a solidarity that spent itself in uncompromising opposition to others, in a struggle against others? Of course the struggle for justice must not ignore the legitimate interests of workers associated in the same occupation or suffering from certain forms of injustice. It cannot ignore the tensions between groups which are often liable to break into open conflict. True solidarity seeks to struggle for a just social order in which all tension can be absorbed and in which conflicts—whether between groups or nations—can be settled more easily. In order to build a world of justice and peace, solidarity must remove the foundations of hatred, selfishness and injustice, which have too often been erected into ideological principles or as a vital law of life in society. Within the same community of work, solidarity sets out to discover the unity inherent in the nature of the work rather than the forces making for division and opposition. It refuses to conceive of society in terms of a struggle “against” and of social relationships in terms of uncompromising opposition between classes. Solidarity, which derives its origin and its strength from the nature of human work, and therefore from the primacy of the human person over things, will create the machinery of dialogue and cooperation that is needed to resolve opposition without seeking to destroy the opponent. No, it is not utopian to assert that the world of work can also be make a world of justice.

**International Solidarity**

The need for man to safeguard the reality of his work and to free it from any ideology in order to bring out once more the true meaning of human effort, becomes particularly apparent when one considers the world of work and the solidarity that it calls for in the international context. The problem of man at work today must be set against a worldwide background which can no longer be ignored. All the major problems of man in society are now world problems! They must be approached on a worldwide scale, in a realistic spirit of course, but in an innovative, critical spirit as well. Whether we are dealing with the problems of natural resources, development, or employment, a satisfactory solution can be found only if the international aspect is borne in mind. As long as fifteen years ago, in 1967, Paul VI noted in his encyclical *Populorum progressio*: “Today, the major fact that everyone must grasp is that the social question has become worldwide in character.” Since then, many events have borne out the truth of this observation. The world economic crisis, with its repercussions throughout the globe, compels us to

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40 *Populorum progressio*, n. 3.
recognize that the horizon of the problems is increasingly a world horizon. The hundreds of millions of starving undernourished human beings, who also have the right to rise up out of their poverty, should make us realize that the fundamental reality today is mankind as a whole. There is a common good which can no longer be confined to a more or less satisfactory compromise between sectional demands or between purely economic requirements. New ethical choices are necessary: a new world conscience must be created; each of us, without denying his origins and the membership of his family, his people and his nation, or the obligations arising therefrom, must regard himself as a member of this great family, the world community.

In other words, Ladies and Gentlemen, we must also seek a fresh significance in human work seen in a world context, and therefore set ourselves fresh tasks. This also means that the worldwide common good requires a new solidarity without frontiers. In saying that, I do not wish to belittle the importance of the efforts that each nation must make, within the limits of its own sovereignty, its own cultural traditions and in accordance with its own needs, to achieve the type of social and economic development which respects the distinctive character of each of its members and of the entire people. Nor must it too readily be supposed that consciousness of solidarity is already sufficiently developed because of the simple fact that we are all aboard this spaceship, Earth. On the one hand, we must ensure that nations complement each other in their efforts to develop their own spiritual and material resources; and on the other hand, we must proclaim the demands made by universal solidarity and the structural consequences it implies. We must maintain this creative tension and in so doing demonstrate how these two realities compliment each other; for like the human person, the nation is distinctively individual and outward looking at one and the same time.

**Unemployment**

Solidarity in the world of work, among men at work, has several facets. It means the solidarity of the workers; above all, in its deepest sense, it means solidarity with work, seen as a fundamental dimension of human existence, on which the meaning of that existence in fact depends. Taken in this sense, solidarity casts a special light on the problem of employment, which has become one of the major problems of our present society and one with harsh consequences for the workers which are too often overlooked, especially when they receive no assistance from society; with harsh consequences for the developing countries as a whole, and for a long time past; with harsh consequences for rural workers whose lot is so often precarious whether they remain in the countryside where there is less and less work for them or whether they try to compete for the few jobs available in the towns; with harsh consequences for professional workers and indeed for all those who, in various categories and segments of the world of work, run the risk of a new form of proletarization whenever their
specific contribution is not appreciated at its true value because of changes in social systems or living conditions.

As we know, the causes of involuntary unemployment may be, and indeed are, many and varied. One of these causes may lie in the improvement in the instruments of production which progressively curtails the direct share of man in the production process. This involves us in a new antimon[y which may well set human labor against capital, defined as the means of production as a whole, comprising natural resources together with the means by which man appropriates this wealth, which has been freely bestowed upon him and converts it to meet his needs. Thus we face a new problem, which is only beginning to reveal its scope and its consequences. To identify it, even in vague and imprecise outline means being prepared to seek a solution from the outset, without waiting for it to force itself upon our attention by the harm it causes. The solution must lie in solidarity with work, in other words, in accepting the principle of the primacy of human work over the means of production, and the primacy of the individual at work over production requirements. We have the first and ultimate criterion in the planning of employment: solidarity with work must be the overriding theme in any search for a solution, and it opens a new field to man’s ingenuity and generosity.

For this reason I ventured to say in *Laborem exercens* that unemployment “in all cases is an evil and... when it reaches a certain level, can become a real social disaster. It is particularly painful when it especially affects young people.” Yes, here again, solidarity is the key to the employment problem. I say so emphatically: whether at the national or international level, a positive solution to the problem of employment, and more particularly employment for young people, presupposes solidarity of the highest degree within and among all peoples. All must be prepared to accept the necessary sacrifices; all must cooperate in the establishment of the programs and agreements through which economic and social policy will become a tangible expression of solidarity; all must help in erecting the appropriate economic, technical, political, and financial structures which the establishment of a new social order of solidarity indisputably requires. I refuse to believe that mankind today, with its prodigious scientific and technical prowess, is incapable of the kind of creative effort, inspired by the very nature of human work and solidarity among all living beings, which will yield fair and effective answers to the essentially human problem of employment.

Free Association

A society of solidarity is built up day by day, first by creating and then by preserving the conditions on which the free participation of all in the common effort effectively depends. Any policy to achieve the common good must be the fruit of
organic and spontaneous cohesion of the forces of society. This is another form of solidarity—solidarity as an imperative of social order, the kind that manifests itself typically through the existence and the work of associations of social partners. The right to associate freely is a fundamental one for all those who are connected with the world of work and who constitute the work community. It means that no working man need be either alone or isolated; it expresses the solidarity of all in the defense of the rights which are rightfully theirs and flow from the requirements of their work; it affords a normal channel for participating actively in the performance of work and everything related to it, while being guided at the same time by a concern for the common good. This right presupposes that the social partners are truly free to form or join an association of their own choosing and to run it. Although the right to freedom of association seems beyond a doubt to be one of the basic rights most generally recognized, as attested by International Labor Convention N. 87 (1948), yet it is severely threatened, often flouted either in its principle or—more often—in one of the substantive aspects, with the result that freedom of association is disfigured. It seems essential to point out that cohesion among the forces of society, always desirable in itself, must be the outcome of free decisions by those concerned, taken in full independence from the political authorities and arrived at in full freedom as regards the determination of the internal organization of trade unions, their operating methods and their activities. The working man must assume the responsibility for defending the truth, the true dignity of his work. He must not be prevented from exercising that responsibility, though also bearing in mind the good of the community.

45.
THE CHRISTIAN WORKER BEARS A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE WORLD OF WORK


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41 This material was delivered as an address on December 19, 1982 in Rome, to representatives of the Christian Workers Movement. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, February 21, 1983, p. 4.
The task of a movement such as yours is above all that of being a witness of Christ in the world of work. It is a matter of an ecclesial task in which the entire Christian community must feel committed, but in a special way those workers who are enlivened by Christian faith! And as Pastor, I feel the duty to renew a pressing appeal to the entire workers’ world: open the doors to Christ and to his saving power, throw open the doors of your hearts and minds to Christ’s message, which is the proclamation of salvation, freedom and true human development.

**Christian Witness in the World of Work**

Dear brothers and sisters, your movement takes on the form of an ecclesial movement precisely when it places among its primary aims that of carrying this message into the world of work. In particular, Christian workers must carry into the world of work that social message, rich in values and proposals, which springs from the same evangelical teaching and which the Church has always, but especially during this past century, from *Rerum novarum* to *Laborem exercens*, offered as an instrument of authentic social development. The contribution of this doctrine operates above all on the level of principles of the moral order, but without them the so-called social question will never be able to find an adequate solution.

**Gospel of Work**

The task of every Christian worker, just as that of every workers’ association, is to be the bearer, proclaimer and witness of what I called the “Gospel of Work” in the cited encyclical, *Laborem exercens*. In the light of this Gospel the worker in workshops, the worker in the fields, the employee and the professional, or in any case every man who carries out an activity, discovers that “the primary basis for determining the value of work is not first of all the type of work performed, but the fact that the one who performs it is a person.” It is upon this principle that the true meaning and value of work and the dignity of the worker are based.

The work of man—whatever kind of work, manual or intellectual—is an act of the human person; every type of work has its human value and every worker has his dignity as a human person.

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42 *Laborem exercens*, nn. 6, 7, 25, 26.

43 *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.
Primacy of Work over Capital

In the light of these basic principles, it can be understood why work’s primacy over capital and every produced good must be reorganized; capital, insofar as it is the overall means of production, is only an instrument, while work is a primary cause, which leads back to man and to his dignity. Through work man fulfills himself, discovers his true identity, and at the same time makes society grow, not only because of the material goods he is able to produce and place at everyone’s disposal, but above all because of the moral values which enrich the community and foster the achievement of the true common good.

Every Christian, and especially the Christian worker, must carry this concept of work into society, since it is the key to dealing with the solutions to all the problems inherent in this area; the remuneration for work (which demands a just family salary); working conditions (which must correspond to the dignity of the worker himself); the types of social security (necessary to ensure the worker during illness, incapacity, old age, unemployment, etc.).

Work: A Participation in God’s Creation

But in addition to the human and social dimension of work, the Christian worker is the bearer of a spiritual and theological dimension of work itself, which brings us closer to God, Creator and Redeemer, and makes us rediscover Christ our Savior, who during his earthly life was also “a man of work.” In fact, human work, seen in its spiritual and theological dimension, is a participation in God’s creative work; it is the continuation of creation. “Individual and collective effort,” we read in Gaudium et spes, “that monumental effort with which men throughout the course of the centuries have labored to better the circumstances of their lives, considered in itself, accords with God’s will. For man, created in God’s image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to him who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth.”

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44 Laborum exercens, n. 26.
45 Gaudium et spes, n. 34.
Solidarity of Work

Christian workers, therefore, have a rich and profound concept of human work, which not only exalts the dignity of the worker, of work and of the world of work, but as a natural consequence urges toward the solidarity among men of work and commits them to work tenaciously for the defense of workers’ rights as an integral part of human rights.

Your movement is itself an expression of this solidarity among men of work, operating in Italian society in the light of the social teaching of the Church.

The solidarity of your movement aims especially at the formation of Christian workers: human, religious, and social formation. The Church is in a position to supply every element for this formation, in such a way that Christian workers may become able to insert themselves into the world of work with the proper concept of life and of society, and thus be Christian leaven in the world in which they operate.

Bearers of a Heritage

I therefore exhort you to continue this essential work of formation, to be always faithful to the teaching of the Church as it springs from the Gospel: I exhort you to be always consistent with your concept of life, convinced that, as Christians, you are the depositories of a heritage of values which can truly make not only the world of work grow, but all of society as well. The Church, in its evangelizing mission, needs your Christian witness commit yourselves therefore, as a movement and as Christians, to be always witnesses of your faith: you yourselves be the Church in the world of work.
Chapter III: Addresses to Workers

46.

Christians Have a Responsibility
To Bring Peace to the World of Work


The world of work today more than ever needs Christian witness; and you young people, if faithful to Christ and the Church, are, with the dynamism and enthusiasm that characterize you, the most suited to attest to the values proper to Christianity.

World of Work Needs Christian Witness

In the working environment, you young Christians are the bearers of a message which, because of its incomparable grandeur, paradoxically sometimes risks not even being noticed. It is up to you to translate it on a daily basis, almost breaking it up, to make it perceptible and livable, within reach, and above all appealing. What is at stake is the fulfillment of man’s potential, which only the Gospel makes fully possible.

I know the motto of the ACLI: “As Christians in the workers’ world.” Be faithful to the challenging commitment that it demands. We must finally consider obsolete the unfortunate conflict which some ideologies of the past century attempted to establish between the workers’ identity and the ecclesial identity, between work and faith. This unfortunate opposition often caused man’s further humiliation, attempting to extinguish in him a light which in reality is inextinguishable. By its very nature, Christianity never tends to extinguish anything which constitutes the true nobility of man, but instead tends to kindle or even to light in him new fires of high ideals and generous dedication to his brother, in whom faith helps to see almost a sacramental sign of God himself.

Therefore, you have new reasons for pursuing a fruitful solidarity among men of

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46 This material was delivered as an address on January 4, 1983 in Rome, to the National Youth Congress of the Italian Christian Workers’ Association (ACLI). The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, February 21, 1983, p. 10.

47 1 Thess 5:19.

48 1 Jn 4:20.
work and the achievement of authentic social justice, prescinding from theories which reduce man to a single dimension, the economic and materialistic one.\textsuperscript{49}

You will be able to give the witness that society needs today, to the extent that you will be able to make the Christian identity which gave birth to your movement, and which at times diminished during the history of your movement, always stronger and more creative.

**Role of the Church and the Liturgy**

Commit yourselves generously to this effort while you continue your active presence in the social fabric of your country. Always remember that your presence would be sterile if it should take place while neglecting to measure yourselves constantly by the word of God authentically interpreted by the ecclesiastical Magisterium, and to immerse yourselves ever more in the faith life of your ecclesial communities. It is rather from there that you must start: nourish yourself on this reality, and direct you every effort to this.

As the Italian bishops expressed so well in the document on “The Italian Church and the Prospects of the Country” of 23 October 1981, “There is no future for a Christianity made up of purely social tradition. And on the other hand, it would be a grave error to pursue the press of daily problems, diminishing the basic commitment which finds its organic aim in the daily confrontation with the word of God, in the Eucharistic celebration and in the duty of witnessing to the Gospel. We shall always be able to derive new ways for serving the country from an intense ecclesial life.”\textsuperscript{50}

**Call for Peace and Dialogue**

The theme of your congress reads: “Peace is the Destiny of Mankind.” What profound concepts are contained in this motto! It is radically Christian, and recalls those ancient and solemn Biblical texts in which the Prophet foretold to the People of God glowing prospects of harmony, accord and, precisely, of peace: when “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,”\textsuperscript{51} when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} *Laborem exercens*, n. 13.

\textsuperscript{50} ”The Italian Church and the Prospects of the Country,” 1981, n. 16.

\textsuperscript{51} Is 2:4.

\textsuperscript{52} Is 11:6.
when “the warrior’s bow shall be banished.” Is all this perhaps a utopia? Vain hope? An illusion? No! On the contrary, the Christian knows that this is the destiny of mankind! He knows that, even if it is not a matter of an imminent goal, it is a certain one and merits all the most generous dedication in order to bring it ever closer. And every effort toward this end is not useless, but fruitful. The Prophet’s words, indeed, are not only our comfort, but also our incentive. “For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” One thing is certain: the Lord has “plans for peace and not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope.”

But this is a destiny to which man must contribute, precisely because it concerns him. And a destiny of peace is certainly not prepared by resorting to conflicts, violence, suppression, both in international life and in relationships between social groups and forces. As I stated in my message for the World Day of Peace on 1 January of last year, not disputes but “dialogue is necessary for true peace.” Only dialogue allows us to know one another. In fact, it is already of the same nature as the goal we want to achieve, since in order to achieve peace, peaceful means are necessary which conform to the principle according to which only similar things generate things similar to themselves.

You, dear young Christian workers, are called to make these values alive and active in the world of your employment.

I exhort you to strengthen ever more your Christian identity and to live it with consistence and in full fidelity to the directions of the pastors of the Church.

53 Zech 9:10.
54 Hab 2:3.
55 Jer 29:11.
56 Papal message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1982, n. 3.
Chapter III: Addresses to Workers

47. Work Is an Essential Aspect of Human Dignity\textsuperscript{57}


A short time ago I was able to make a tour through your factory and I was able to realize personally not only how big and modern it is, but also to realize the nature of your work. And when one knows firsthand what a man does, especially if this is his everyday life, then not only does he appreciate him, but he loves him even more. It is as if a sharing, and therefore a communion, were created, which normally is impossible at a distance. Well then, this very current has been established between you and me. You thus have the assurance of my esteem and furthermore of my complete affection.

Appreciation of Daily Work

Today, as you know, is the feast day of St. Joseph, that is, the feast day of a man who was not only the putative father of Jesus, but who practiced manual labor, certainly not as a hobby, but to procure the necessary sustenance for himself and for his singular family. This is why I have come among you today here in San Salvo: to venerate the greatest worker Saint and in a special way to honor work in itself, which constitutes your daily occupation.

Work is an essential part of man’s life on this earth, already starting from the moment of his creation. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself accepted it and practiced it for many years: and it could not have been otherwise, from the moment that he assumed the most common human condition and lived as a man among men, one could say as a worker among workers.

Humanization of Work

These brief observations allow us to recognize in work an unmatchable statute of dignity. It is true: it is also a weight, exertion, sweat. But on the other hand, it allows man to fulfill himself, to respond to his vocation as the lord of creation, since it gives him the possibility of elaborating and transforming matter. And above all it

\textsuperscript{57} This material was delivered as an address on March 19, 1983 in San Salvo, Italy, to workers of the Italian glass industry. The translation was taken from \textit{L’Osservatore Romano}, April 25, 1983, p. 4.
furnishes him the way to procure sustenance and a dignified life for himself and for his dear ones: a typically human end, without which one would place himself only on the level of a machine or a robot. Precisely this ever greater humanization of work is particularly close to my heart; furthermore, as you know, I always try to promote it.

True Prosperity

This, therefore, is also the wish I make to your factory, to each one of you, directors and workers, and consequently to your families. May the work you do truly serve your human development, be a source of true satisfaction for you, be the opportunity for Christian witness, the place and reason for the affirmation of justice, and may it thus contribute to everyone’s social well-being, as well as to your personal prosperity in the widest sense of the word.

48. WORK PLAYS AN IRREPLACEABLE ROLE IN THE PERSONAL GROWTH OF THE WORKER


To this reason for pride of a specifically Christian nature are added others which are on a more directly human level. They are reasons arising from the awareness of the irreplaceable role which work plays as much in the growth of the person as in the building up of society. In fact, just as the nation derives its own well-being from its citizen’s activity, individual workers find in the daily dedication to their tasks an effective school of professional seriousness, of personal responsibility, of courageous attachment to the fundamental values of civil coexistence.

58 This material was delivered as an address on May 21, 1983 in Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, to a group of workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, June 13, 1983, pp. 11, 12.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

Work’s Role in Personal Growth

In this regard, how can we not recall the lofty witness of civic conscience offered forty years ago by this city’s workers in December 1943, when the workers of all the factories crossed their arms as a sign of protest against the dictatorship’s abuses?

Work is the school of humanity, and man, when he learns to be himself, learns also to defend the values in which he believes.

Negative Aspects of Human Work

This observation, which is confirmed by the experience of what happens in many parts of the world, does not exhaust every facet of that complex phenomenon which is human work. Alongside positive values, it does not lack elements, also considerable, which seem to contradict the optimistic evaluation just now proposed.

Work is monotonous and tiring. Not only that, it seems to bring the humiliation of the needs connected with man’s spirituality. Work, especially that of the laborer, seems to require the human being’s subjugation to his work: the machine and the ever more sophisticated technical organization of production impose objective laws on the individual’s services and often obstruct the realization of his personal inventive and expressive abilities.

Moreover, the work of an office worker and of an administrative or organizational employee is not substantially different from that of a laborer: technological innovation, and today especially that of cybernetics, often reduces to zero the professional capacities previously acquired and necessitates beginning anew to reacquire one’s professional qualifications in obedience to the changed characteristics of the organization of work.

Alienation of Worker from Work

Besides, the general law of the separation of the worker from his own work remains: the man who works is not dedicated directly to an activity intended for his own moral and spiritual edification, but he renders a service to the common good, a service whose effective advantage for the common good is nevertheless conditioned, and at the same time threatened, by the complex network of all economic relations. This circumstance also contributes to creating an impression of the worker’s being extraneous to his own work.
Domination by Economics

Finally, the fact that economic relations are determined by money must not be forgotten. The objective recognition of everyone’s participation in the common good is made concrete by buying power. Under this profile, economic relations become also relations of power and therefore a potential cause for conflict in which the individual categories are easily inclined to see and to claim only their own rights or, more simply, their own interests.

Human Limitations Call for the Transcendent

For all these reasons work appears to be a reality much less positive and free than a superficial consideration of it would lead one to believe. In addition, there is another complex facet of work to be considered, which is also true and unquestionable, but nevertheless too often ignored. Work is also the proof of human limitation, the limitation of the individual, who needs the participation of everyone else in order to acquire the fundamental needs of his own life. But also the limitation of the collective undertaking of men, which can never achieve the objective of creating everything that is indispensable to the life of each one. In fact, man does not live only by what his hands can produce. He bears in himself expectations and hopes that no earthly reality can ever completely satisfy. This is indeed the truth: man finds the full meaning of life only beyond and above life itself. He finds it in God who, in Christ, approached him in order to save him.

With this, I do not mean to say that an ever fuller liberation of man from conditions which today still oppress him in various forms should not be promoted with every reasonable means. What is being stated is the fatal “incompleteness” of every similar effort if at the same time one does not open himself to the transcendent dimension of faith.

Work and Rest

Man’s freedom and hope, in his participation as worker in the collective work, are guaranteed only if he finds rest in the faithful consideration of God’s work. Do we not find here the profound reason for the Biblical precept which requires man to suspend his work weekly in order to enter into God’s rest and to offer to him, by participating in the Eucharist, “the fruits of the earth and the work of his own hands?” Through this pause man can more easily place himself in harmony with the Lord’s plan and find in reflection on his creative work, which is the only work that is completed,
the basis of a “hope which does not disappoint.” In fact, there is an explicit promise by God in this regard: “Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways!”; only he will be able “to eat the fruit of his handiwork,” since that work will be accompanied and made fruitful by God’s blessing.

Right to Employment

What need there is for God’s blessing in today’s world, weighed down by so many and such grave threats! Among the many distresses which trouble mankind today I want to recall here only one to which you are especially exposed: unemployment. I well know how much this problem afflicts the world of work, caught these past few years in the coils of an economic crisis which threatens every attempt at recovery.

One of the reasons for today’s visit is precisely this: to attest to my participation in the sufferings of those who have lost their places of employment and in the anxieties of those who see their security threatened. The problem of unemployment is a fundamental problem, as I wrote in the encyclical Laborem exercens, especially if it is considered in relation to young people “who, after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work, and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated.”

Certainly, it is a question of a complex problem which is influenced by numerous factors connected with the new developments in the technological, economic and political conditions, as I recognized at the beginning of the aforementioned document. Nevertheless, there are not missing among its causes culpable delays, lack of solidarity, blameworthy egotism. For its part, the Church does not tire of “calling attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated.”

Therefore I also take this opportunity to renew a passionate appeal to all those who have the power of economic or political initiative, that they unite their efforts in a

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59 Rm 5:5.
60 Ps 128; Gen 1:28.
61 Laborem exercens, n. 18.
62 Laborem exercens, n. 1.
63 Laborem exercens, n. 1.
coordinated and responsible action which, within the framework of sacrifices equitably distributed among the citizens, will open new perspectives in this fundamental sector of social life. In fact, the harmonious commitment of everyone will bring about that progress in justice and well-being which constitutes the common aspiration of the various parts of the social whole.

**Respect for the Dignity of All**

With the wish that these expectations be finally satisfied. I lift my prayer to the Father of all men and all peoples that he enlighten every person of good will and direct their commitment towards the goal of an ever more mature respect for the dignity of the person, the subject and end of every work activity, for the building up of a society that is just, free and at peace.

**49. WORK CONTRIBUTES TRUE NOBILITY FOR THE HUMAN PERSON**

Being qualified “Knights of Labor” means that the modern world considers work a true and authentic “nobility” for man, in that it corresponds to the dignity of the human person. Work is a good thing for man. And—as I wrote in my apostolic exhortation on human labor—“it is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man’s dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it. . . . Work is a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves

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64 This material was delivered as an address on October 10, 1983 in Rome, to members of the Italian National Federation of the Knights of Labor. The translation was taken from *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 19, 1983, p. 8.
fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being.’”

I hope that all citizens acquire an ever clearer awareness of the duty which they have of offering this personal contribution of their work, day after day, so that in mutual trust and sincere dialogue, conflicts might be overcome, and the ideal of solidarity, justice, peace, concord, and the union of everyone’s efforts for the common good might be ever more affirmed.

Ora et Labora

In 1962, my predecessor John XXIII, of venerated memory, gave St. Benedict the Abbot to your Federation as your Patron Saint. With this gesture, he wanted not only to offer you a protector in heaven, but also to present you a shining and great example of profound Christian faith and of tireless activity on behalf of the brethren and for the progress of the various communities. You must continuously model yourselves on your saint, whose undisputed and historic influence was happily synthesized in the motto “Ora et Labora” (“Pray and work”), in fulfilling your daily commitments—familial and professional—that you might live a worthy life in the light and the strength of the Christian message.

50.

THE MEANING OF WORK DEPENDS ON THE MEANING OF LEISURE AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST


I listened with great attention and vital interest to the addresses made by your representatives, dear workers, grasping their important elements: the land of Marsica

65 Laborum exercens, n. 9.

66 This material was delivered as an address on March 24, 1985 in Fucino, Italy, to workers from forty-six countries. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, April 29, 1985, p. 6.
is a land of much suffering, made sometimes hard by especially tragic events; but a land that you have transformed radically, making a marshy territory fertile, promoting communications in places where the mountains imposed isolation on the individual communities, creating workplaces where the forced emigration was the painful destiny of so many young people.

The Sufferings of Work

I should like to show each one of you my solidarity in the aspiration which you have expressed and which gives force to your daily work, to overcome whatever makes man dissatisfied with his condition; denouncing openly whatever comes from egoism, domination, or cheating workers of their just interests; committing yourselves to work for an effective social promotion, for the respect of man’s dignity in the world of agriculture, industrial, and artisans’ work. You have spoken very clearly of your problems. As you say, one must defeat the modern forms of slavery and promote laws that are ever more just and adequate in order to overcome, with the commitment of all, the worrisome amount of unemployment. It is equally urgent to return the fruits of the earth to their providential destination, to dispel the hunger of man. In a world in which so great a part of humanity is tried by hunger, and the means of conservation and of transport of the nutritional products become constantly more efficient, it is a source of deep bitterness that one must have recourse to the destruction of produce in order to save businesses. Defending the fruits of the ground, we may increase the return to agriculture which many young people already feel to be a healthy program for their future and for their cultural needs.

The ministry which has been entrusted to me, and which has brought me to you here, urges me to make myself the echo of your requests and to encourage with renewed vigor all of your suggestions of a generous commitment to overcome the obstacles which still confront you.

Christ Is Our Model

I have come here in remembrance of St. Joseph, patron of workers, who found the meaning of his daily work in the living presence of Christ beside his workbench. Thus he became the model of the Christian worker. He helps us to understand the profound sense of the word of God about human work: “Fill the earth; subdue it and dominate it;” 67 “It will produce thorns and thistles for you. . . . You will eat bread in the sweat

67 Gen 1:22.
of your brow.”68 These two affirmations of God at the beginning of the Bible, on the threshold of history, enlighten with power and truth the drama of man’s work. They indicate above all God’s intention to entrust to man the task of realizing himself, acquiring with his work a true dominion over the world. They announce beforehand, too, the reversal that followed sin, reducing man to the necessity of supporting as a burden what had been offered him as a gift. The drama is resolved, not in the defeat of man—as if work were a curse for him—but in the salvific love of God, who reaches out His hand to man to take up again the project that had been broken. . . .

Collaboration with God the Architect

“The Church is convinced that work constitutes a fundamental dimension of man’s existence on earth”: this is what I wrote in the encyclical Letter about work.69 Even on the purely human level, we know that man can become himself and reach the goal of his life by means of the assiduous undertaking to transform himself, and by his hard work that has its object in the world that surrounds him: overcoming obstacles, planning new conditions of existence, producing the goods necessary for body and spirit, bread and culture. But human experience, subject to disappointments and deformations, receives a formidable support from the Christian vision. We are struck by the fact that in the Bible God manifests himself for the first time to the world and to the eyes of man as Creator, that is, as one who constructs the world with wisdom and goodness. God himself appears as a worker, in the form of the architect70 or in that of the artisan.71 Far from being the jealous master of His creation, God gives it to man joyfully and without reservations, and entrusts him with the task of prolonging God’s work in accord with a progress that is never finished. In this way—and not through a static and frightened resignation—man can disclose to his own consciousness and to that of all creatures that he bears in himself the seal of a divine origin and destination. His work, every form of work, becomes in a certain manner the prolongation and completion of God’s project.

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69 Laborem exercens, n. 4.

70 Gen 1.

71 Gen 2.
A Just Reward for Collaboration

Work is an assignment that God makes to man; but it can turn out to be difficult, and the worker may not see the fruits of his own efforts. It happens often that the painful toil of so many men and women is not sufficiently recognized and justly remunerated.

The social teaching of the Church—as you well know—forcefully affirms the worker’s right to have a just reward and, at the same time, proclaims the primacy of man in relation to work. Man must become, not the slave, but the master of his own work; that is, he must see his own dignity respected in the work.

The consequences of this principle are enormous: man may never be treated as an instrument of production; men who work have the right to solidarity among themselves and to support from society, so that their participation in the growth of the social good may be safeguarded, along with the right to a just salary, and to the security of the persons of the workers and of their respective families.

In this context, turning my thoughts to so many unemployed, especially to the young people in search of their first job, aware of the need of a cultural and educative process for those who encounter today the world of work which is continually exposed to higher and higher levels of specialization, I cannot do other than implore those who have political and social responsibilities to contribute with all the resources of their intelligence and good will to the resolution of these problems that so particularly involve the dignity of the person, with the participation of the workers themselves, with realism, courage and breadth of vision.

The Importance of Leisure for Understanding Work

But the dignity of the workers would be too little recognized, and the truth and force with which the Christian revelation is charged would be impoverished, were I not to say in a loud voice that, to realize man’s vocation, work is not enough, and that there exists another task which the person takes on as the soul of the daily toil. Within the very system of work there resounds the commandment of the Lord, a commandment that shines out from the very beginning in the repose of the seventh day:72 “Remember the Sabbath day, to make it holy: six days you shall toil and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath in honor of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work . . . because in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and the

72 Gen 2:1-3.
sea and all that is in it, but on the seventh day He rested. Therefore the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day and declared it sacred.”

Work and the Eucharist

With the resurrection of Jesus on the first day after the Sabbath, the day of the Lord has become Sunday. It is the precious moment in which the one who works—sometimes doing hard work—can rediscover the sense of his work, expressing thanks to God for the labor of his own hands, sharing in a more extended way the company of those dear to him, from whom work risks keeping him far away, and visiting persons who are sick and needy. In particular, every Christian is called to share in a festive banquet, the Sunday Mass. Gathered together to form the Christian community, the workers are enabled to sense the share in a reality that should give them strength. After having explained the Word of God, the celebrant raises the bread and the wine to God, proclaiming, “Blessed are You, Lord God of all creation. From Your goodness we have received this bread (and this wine), fruit of the earth and of the work of man, and we present it to You, so that it may become for us the food of eternal life (the cup of salvation).” God gives us in Jesus Christ the grace to perceive the true meaning of our work. Even if the work is sometimes united to tribulations, it is no longer a curse, a sweat with our fruit, but is a sharing in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. As happened for Jesus, the toil—sometimes heavy—of work becomes a sacrificial prayer for deliverance from the evil in one’s own heart and that of others, and at the same time is transformed into the capacity to see, in the ever better construction of the city of man, a prophecy, an anticipation, of what will be the definitive Kingdom of God.

Work and Reconciliation

Concluding my dialogue with you, dear workers of Marsica, I wish to add to this invitation to make your work a prayer united to the sacrifice of Christ, the appeal suggested by the forthcoming Italian Ecclesial Assembly which has as its theme “Christian reconciliation and the community of men;” I entrust to you the task of bearing witness in the world of work, and in the wider world of society, to Christian reconciliation, the gift of God.

73 Ex 20:8-11.
Solidarity of Workers

Beside us is this great center for telecommunications, built by the I.R.I., a center that bears witness to the possibility of making use of the most modern technologies to facilitate the diffusion of knowledge and information even by means of communications through space.

Here, before the Telespace, expression of the most advanced science and of how much man has been able to realize with his work, I should like to address greetings and good wishes to all the workers of the world, calling down on them the protection of St. Joseph.

I greet all the workers of the world, with warm sympathy and great affection. Yes, dear worker, I wish to assure you that the Church is near you, that she is your ally, your friend. May you have confidence in her! She is beside you, to defend your legitimate aspirations and the dignity of your work, convinced that “work is a good of man—a good of his humanity—for, by means of work, not only does man transform nature in adapting it to his own needs, but even more, he realizes himself as man and even, in a certain sense, becomes more man.” This is the plan of God, these are my greetings, this is what you must aim at.

May work be held in honor! And above all, may all the workers of the world be held in honor!

The installations of this Italian center for diffusion of television allow the transmission everywhere in the world of this meeting on this Sunday that follows the feast of St. Joseph: they remind us that there can be a rich hope in this new technological stage in the sphere of communications. I wish that these media may always make a true contribution to agreement among men and to the progress of humanity.

“Dialogue of Salvation” with the World

The Church proclaims her deep desire to be close to all the workers of the world. She wants to be part of your lives, and to speak to you about the supreme relevance that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has for you in the ordinary circumstances in which you find yourselves every day.

74 *Laborem exercens*, n. 559.
The Church wants to speak to you about the dignity of your work, and how it contributes to your human and Christian advancement, to the betterment of the family and the nation, and to the very transformation of the world. As the Church points out your rights and duties, she proclaims that your work is a sharing in the activity of God the Creator. All of this she declares in the name of Christ, who looks with love upon human work and who himself belonged to the “working world.”

Yes, the Church wants to hold with you workers a “dialogue of salvation,” and she wants to do this in every diocese and in every parish church. For it is at this level that you must live and act as Christians. It is in these situations that you are called to apply the teaching of Christ, and through the honesty of your work and the uprightness of your lives to bear witness before your co-workers to the power of the Gospel. In all this, St. Joseph is your example and patron and friend.

Work Is Not Servitude but a Right

I greet you heartily also, German-speaking workers and employers. Joseph, the patron of workers, whose feast we have kept last week, reminds us of the value and the dignity of all human work, whether it makes demands more on our physical strength or on our intellectual strength. Work does not mean servitude, but is rather a commission and vocation to an active cooperation in the shaping of the creation and of human society. Work is a basic right and a basic duty of man.

Therefore, work may not divide you from one another into two groups; instead, work obliges us to mutual solidarity and fraternity—the employers and the employed, those who do physical work and those who do intellectual work, those who have work and those who cannot find a place of work. Only through common endeavors, which include sacrifices for one another also, can you master the great problems in the modern world of work with success and to the benefit of all. Those among you who are Christian are called in a special way, in the spirit of the Gospel, to recognize their neighbor in the underprivileged and the needy, and to come to their aid with sympathy and practical deeds.

May God bless the world of your work! May He bless the work of your hands and of your intellect!
51.

Collaboration with God Achieves
The Priority of the Person


The Son of God became man and worked with human hands. Work, then, has a dignity of its own in God’s plan for creation. We hear in the very first page of the Book of Genesis that man was created “in the image of God . . . male and female.” Entrusting the whole universe to him, God told him to “be fruitful, to multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.”

So we know, not only by reason alone but through Revelation, that by his work man shares in the Creator’s work. He continues it and, in a sense, perfects it by his own work, by his toil, by his daily effort to wrest a livelihood from the earth, or from the sea, or to apply his energies to the many different processes of production.

How noble is this mission that only man—by his work—can realize!

Collaboration with God

Indeed, we Christians are convinced that the achievements of the human race—in art, science, culture, and technology—are a sign of God’s greatness and the flowering of His own mysterious design.

Jesus himself gave particular emphasis to this truth: That through His work man shares in the activity of the Creator, for Jesus was himself a working man, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth. Jesus clearly belonged to the “working world.” So did most of His disciples and listeners: ordinary fishermen, farmers and workers. So, when He speaks about the Kingdom of God, Jesus constantly uses terms connected with human work: the work of the shepherd, the farmer, the doctor, the sower, the householder, the servant, the steward, the fisherman, the merchant, the laborer. And he compares

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75 This material was delivered as an address on May 5, 1984 in Pusan, South Korea, to Korean workers. The translation was taken from The Pope Speaks, Fall 1984, pp. 225-228.

76 Gen 1:27-28.
the building up of God’s Kingdom to the mutual world of harvesters and fishermen.

Priority of the Person over the Product

From Jesus’ own teaching we can clearly see that man who works is much more important than the product of his work. Human work comes from man; it is intended to benefit man, to promote his God-given dignity. Even the biggest city, the most complicated computer, the greatest nation, is only something made by man and is meant to serve man, to benefit man. Never the other way around.

That is why the Second Vatican Council, speaking of the value of human work, declares: “A person is more precious for what he is than for what he has. Similarly, all that people do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood and a more humane ordering of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances. For these advances can supply the material for human progress, but of themselves alone they can never actually bring it about.”

Nevertheless, this order of values is not always respected. Today’s society, so taken up with developing a one-sided materialistic civilization, often treats work as a special kind of merchandise. Man is often treated as a mere instrument of production, like a material tool that should cost as little as possible while producing the maximum. In these cases the worker is not respected as a true collaborator of the Creator.

Work Must Transcend Ideologies

Unfortunately, the whole issue of work has often been looked at from the viewpoint of conflict between “capital” and “labor”: a conflict that has vast social, ideological, and political implications. This conflict has been a great tragedy for humanity and a source of suffering for untold millions of individual human beings and families.

I well realize that the relationship between employers and employees in the context of your Korean cultural and social traditions has its own special characteristics, and that it is not true that the way to better relationships is to be found in a simplistic application of standards and methods devised elsewhere. Still less by imposing alien ideological systems which have allowed flagrant injustices to persist, or have created

77 *Gaudium et spes,* n. 35.

78 *Laborem exercens,* n. 11.
new ones, threatening the very peace of the world.

**Participation Is a Key to Justice**

Justice requires that ways be found to give workers a greater share in the organizational aspects of production and in profits, and I am pleased to know that initiatives have been taken in this direction.

Justice also requires that the workers themselves benefit from the success of the enterprise in which they work, and that they have the satisfaction of knowing that through diligent and conscientious work they are thereby contributing to the social development of their country.

**The Gospel of Work**

Of course, we know that work is not all fulfillment and satisfaction. Yes, work involves toil and struggle and you have all experienced this. Work has been profoundly affected by sin, as we read in the Book of Genesis: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”\(^{79}\) That is why we can never fathom the full meaning of work without looking to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ in which He conquered sin and transformed all work. His work, His suffering, His obedience unto death receive their full meaning in His Resurrection: This is the “gospel of work” contained in the life and teaching of our Redeemer.

**Work and Suffering**

So we Christians find in human work a small share in the Cross of Jesus Christ. We must learn to live this human experience with Christ’s attitude. By uniting our work with the mission of our Savior, we help bring about the new earth where justice dwells,\(^{80}\) and we contribute mightily to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Dear workers, farmers, and fishermen, I realize that, in solidarity with millions of your fellow workers, you have had to suffer much and are continuing to suffer for the birth of this “new earth” in your land. Often in the face of indifference, misunderstanding, and even harassment, you have, as Christians consciously committed

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\(^{79}\) Gen 3:19.

\(^{80}\) 2 Pt 3:13.
to promoting the rights and welfare of fellow workers and farmers, patiently and bravely borne the cross. All of us must work together in fraternal love to show that a more just sharing of the world’s goods means access to these goods especially through a just wage.

Christ the Answer

Take heart from the words of the Gospel! The Beatitudes and the woes you have just heard are the very words of the Lord appealing on behalf of the poor and oppressed against every form of injustice and social and personal selfishness. Take courage, “for the Kingdom of God is yours!”

Beloved brothers and sisters of Korea, my friends: You do, indeed, have a special place in the heart of Jesus and of His Church. I know that the proportion of Christians among industrial workers, farmers, and fishermen is small: herein lies a great challenge for the shepherds of the Church in Korea and for yourselves. Be certain that the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the carpenter of Nazareth, can supply answers to the doubts and questions of working men and women. Only Jesus Christ can sustain your hopes and dispel your anxieties. He alone can show you the meaning of your daily toil. In His name and together with His Church continue, through peaceful and upright means, to pursue human dignity, promote human rights and create a better world for yourselves, your children and your children’s children.

May Jesus bless your work! May He bless your families and friends, and give you His peace in overflowing measure! And through His grace may all your activities be linked to prayer, so that you may bring forth abundant “words of faith” leading to justification and eternal life.

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81 Lk 6:20.
82 Jas 2:17.

I come to you, dear brothers, prompted by the liveliest sentiments of fraternal solidarity and moved by the conviction that, despite difficulties of every sort, the type of work you do must not be an obstacle to the realization of the great objectives that give meaning and dignity to life. Prior to the advent of Christianity, physical labor, like every other form of sacrifice and suffering, was considered only an unavoidable fate tied to our existence, without light on the horizon. In particular, the ancient Romans considered the mines places of condemnation and, with the harshness of the Latin expression damnare ad metalla, indicated a destiny without escape. It pleases me to recall, at this point, that one of my predecessors, Pope St. Pontianus, the first Pope to set foot on Sardinian soil seventeen centuries ago, was sent there as one condemned to the mines because of his fearless profession of the Christian faith. And today the Church, venerating him as a martyr, intends to pay homage to a man who witnessed to the Faith to the extent of making the ultimate sacrifice.

Called to Subdue the Earth

The conditions under which you carry on your work today are fortunately no longer those of that time. They remain very arduous, however, and you merit special gratitude on the part of the entire society. In fact, thanks to the work carried on in the dark depths of the earth, the community is able to make its own new riches which were hidden there, and to put them to use for the sustenance and growth of the whole human family.

This is in fact God’s design: to call man to collaborate, through the efforts of his mind and his strength, in the magnificent work of “subduing the earth.” And thus,

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83 This material was delivered as an address on October 18, 1985, in Sardina, Italy, to miners of the Monteponi Mines. The translation was taken from The Pope Speaks, vol. 31, Spring 1986, pp. 10-15.
dear workers of Sardinia, you are always present to the heart of the Church which, by virtue of her fidelity to Christ, looks upon you with eyes of special love and sincere concern.

**The Many Aspects of Work**

From the very beginning of the so-called “social question” in the last century consequent to the phenomenon of massive industrialization, the Church has committed herself to following its development at each step of the way, choosing to stay close to those who suffer the most and are defenseless and raising her voice at the proper moment against the systematic violations of the dignity of the human person, the exploitation of workers, the appearance of growing sectors of the misery, and even of hunger.

With numerous interventions in the course of the past decades, the Church has claimed for workers the right to a job that is dignified and fairly recompensed for the worker and his family, and has called for “new movements of solidarity among and with workers.”

Avoiding a narrow view of the question, the Church sees human work in the totality of its major components, under the religious, human, family, and social aspects. She is aware that only the Faith gives full meaning to work, placing man—who is by nature a worker—at the center of the universe and relating him to God. Only in this way is there laid the transcendental foundation of a justice that is no longer left to the whims of special interests or of ideological interpretations. Human activity of any sort thus becomes a factor of humanization, of evangelization and of authentic progress.

**Work Is More than Economics**

Dear workers, in harmony with the teachings of the Popes who have preceded me, I never tire of repeating to everyone, to executive groups and to social forces, that the value of human work cannot be reduced to the simple process of production or considered solely in relation to its economic end.

Conceptions of this kind have unfortunately created the premises for great injustices, with very negative consequences for the moral and civil evolution of

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84 *Laborem exercens*, n. 8.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

society. Using such premises, in fact, one profoundly alters the true notion of work, deprives the worker of his prerogatives, and distorts the very truth about man, who is left humiliated in his most profound dignity.

The human person is not limited to temporal reality, much less to his work. A sign of this preeminence of man over the logic of production is certainly to be seen in the right to the Sunday rest: to be understood not merely as the interruption of economic-productive work and the recuperation of physical energies, but also as free time not geared towards the economy, time which allows the human person to tend more assiduously to family, cultural, social, and religious life, to rediscover himself, turning to the superior values of love, friendship, prayer, and contemplation.85

Develop a Spirituality of Work

We all know that it is not difficult for a man to degrade himself because of work; every day we actually witness the harsh reality that there are various ways of exploiting human work in order to make it a means of human oppression. But, on the other hand, we also know that when man is placed in the right perspective as a protagonist of the world in which he works, he can, through his work, realize himself as man and even, in a certain sense, become more human.86 Man’s dignity is not measured by what he does, by his capacity to transform and develop products of the earth, by the quantity of his material profit, but by what he is.

And I will go even further: through work he can realize himself as a Christian and, in a certain sense, be more Christian. This becomes possible when man, giving work the meaning that it has in God’s eyes, lets himself be guided by faith, hope and charity. Then he comes closer to God, enters into the work of salvation, and his work becomes an exercise of faith and a stimulus to goodness and prayer.

This consideration is not surprising if one reflects on the fact that the whole man, body and spirit, participates in work, regardless of whether it is manual or intellectual. Thus, the Church rightly recalls the duty to develop a spirituality of work in the Christian sense of the expression.87

85 *Gaudium et spes*, nn. 61-67; *Populorum progressio*, n. 20.

86 *Laborem exercens*, n. 9.

87 *Laborem exercens*, n. 24.
This is why Sacred Scripture presents for our consideration two scenes, very rich in content, which I would like simply to recall here. In the Garden of Genesis the first man, created by God, was also the first worker. In the New Covenant, at Nazareth, next to Mary’s house stood a little carpenter’s shop, where first the worker Joseph, and then Jesus, having also become a worker, labored in order to earn their daily bread—like you, like all workers throughout the world—by the sweat of their brow, in order to support the family.

The family! It represents the vital link which gives work its impulse of love. Universal mover, love animates the social aim of work and transforms it into service for the construction of a society of brothers and sisters: the civilization, precisely, of love.

Work Must Be Seen in Light of the Cross

Dear brother workers, I must still bring to mind another aspect of this matter, in order to enrich the image that the Christian view proposes.

The Book of Genesis teaches that the painful experience of labor performed “with the sweat of your brow” is a consequence of the sin committed by man in the beginning. Sin, my dear friends, is a tragic reality not to be forgotten; it stands at the origin of society’s evils and man’s suffering. The Church, committed to eliminating injustices from the working world, is no less committed, under the guidance of God, to combating sin and reducing its consequences. Still, the Church is realistically aware that, despite the efforts, suffering will continue to have a place in the life of the world.

Leo XIII, the great Pope who with such farsightedness analyzed the problems of work, wrote on the subject words which, today, in the light of historical truth, appear prophetic. He exhorted mankind not to let itself be deceived by those who want to “totally eliminate suffering from the world. Those who claim that they can do it and promise miserable people a life free of suffering and pain, all peace and delight, delude the people and lead them along a path that brings greater sufferings than those of the present.”

Christians often accept the weight and the pain of labor as expiation for sin, as purification of the soul, a return to lost innocence. But this penitential conception of work, which certainly has an importance that cannot be neglected, does not mean the

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88 Gen 3:19.
89 Rerum novarum, n. 27.
renunciation of efforts to change unjust situations, nor of the duty to improve society in a concrete way. It simply means conscious participation in the mystery of a divine plan of love which asks man’s collaboration for the salvation of all humanity and the ennobling of the world, transforming the common and widespread element of suffering into an instrument of grace. Without this evangelical perspective, it is impossible to understand the sacrifice of the cross and to associate oneself with its immense value.

In speaking to you, dear workers, who have gathered in such numbers from various parts of Sardinia in order to hear once again some of the basic elements of the social teaching of the Church—so rich in ferment and potential—it is clear that I wish for you, for workers throughout the island, Italy and the world, and in particular for those who, like you miners, face more harsh environmental situations, improvement in the conditions of life and courageous legislation which will increasingly free you from the danger of being enslaved by purely productive work. I assure you that this prospect, for me, once a laborer like yourselves, is one of the objects of my daily prayers and my constant pastoral solicitude. And I fervently desire that my exhortation may stimulate you in an effort to grow humanly and spiritually.

The Scourge of Unemployment

Still, while my gaze falls upon various sectors of this assembly, my thoughts cannot help but run towards another scene, one which so saddens the hearts of all of us. It is the spectacle, effectively evoked by the man who spoke on your behalf, of a mass of young people of this tenacious and industrious island who, due to a lack of work, are forced to remain idle.

It is a known fact that the phenomenon of unemployment is today striking, with a percentage that keeps increasing, nearly all the countries of the more industrialized world. But it is a cause of great pain and concern to note, when glancing at the statistics, that Sardinia is one of the areas hardest hit.

Without a doubt, as I have several times pointed out, the phenomenon can only be resolved in a satisfactory way through a just and rational coordination of initiatives within the framework of the national community, and also through recourse to treaties and agreements of international collaboration.90 At this moment, however, I wish to appeal to all national and regional authorities, to all the political and social forces, who have the true good of man at heart, in order that, with a sense of great priority, they might multiply their efforts for the purpose of stimulating initiatives, of planning

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90 Laborem exercens, n. 18.
coordination, so that the widespread scourge of unemployment will be effectively faced, within a short period of time and little by little finally eliminated.

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**Work Is a Path for Growing in God’s Image**


I feel happy to find myself among you, men and women of Bogota, you who work in this populous metropolis, whose flourishing life and urban growth depend to a large degree on your tenacious hard work. Today my words are intended for all the workers of Colombia, in their diverse professions and tasks, who are trying to construct a more humane city, one more welcoming for people and families, one which contains hope of a better tomorrow.

**Constructing a Humane City**

I have no need to tell you how near I am to your joys and sorrows, your fears and hopes, for my heart—as you very well know—is equal to yours in being the heart of a worker. As we listen to the parable of the talents, which has just been proclaimed, we confidently raise our faces to Christ, for with his own activity he sanctified work and to him we shall have to render account for the gifts we have received.

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91 This material was delivered as a homily on July 3, 1986 in Bogota, Columbia, to Columbian workers. The translation was taken from *Origins*, July 17, 1986, pp. 309-313.
Suffering and Anxieties

Among you there will be many who find great satisfaction in their work. A safe job, with a wage sufficient to support one’s family, the happiness of being able to offer one’s children a well-provided table in a decent and comfortable home, to be able to clothe them well and give them a good upbringing with a view to a better future. For this, always show God a grateful heart. There will also be not a few with great difficulties. I mean those of you who suffer the sorrow of seeing your children deprived of what is necessary to feed, clothe, and educate them or you who live in the straitened conditions of a humble district where the essential services are lacking, far from your work places, with work which is sometimes ill rewarded and uncertain, in anxiety at the insecurity of the future. And unfortunately many among you are victims of unemployment. You suffer because you have no work after having looked for it in vain and even though you are capable of doing it. These difficult situations move me deeply. They are linked with a whole series of factors that affect the complex phenomenon of the world of labor.

The Meaning of Work

In the encyclical *Laborem exercens* I considered human labor as the essential key to the whole social question, since a gradual solution to this question calls inevitably for greater humanization of work and of the worker’s life. This evening I therefore call upon you, dear fellow workers, to reflect together with me upon some aspects of human work from the point of view of the Gospel, the source of light and hope which ennobles and dignifies all authentically human activity.

In God’s plan work constitutes a fundamental dimension of the person. Through work, indeed, man shares in the Creator’s work, while he grows in his own being; his perfection is achieved as he subjects material to his service.

So man is responsible for all the goods that God has entrusted to him from the beginning. You too have this responsibility, men and women of Colombia. The Creator was pleased to endow this land of yours providentially with immense resources. The responsibility therefore falls upon you of causing them to bear fruit and serve the well-being of all. No one must forget that the goods which God has entrusted to man have a universal destiny. Consequently, they must not be the exclusive property of a few, whether these few be individuals, groups, or nations. Therefore, those who bear the responsibility of administering the goods of creation have to take account—in accordance with the divine will—not only of their own needs, but also those of everybody else, in such a way that no one, but above all the poorest shall be barred from access to such goods.
Work Is a Human Necessity

You need work in order to meet your vital necessities. Yet much more than a biological necessity, work is a moral necessity. Man realizes himself through creative activity. Through it he gains a better perception of his condition of being in God’s image, the master and lord of creation. Through work he turns himself more into man. For these reasons, it is necessary that work also be a path of liberation. Work must be liberated from everything impeding the development of man as God’s image. Work must always elevate the person in his dignity and never degrade him.

Since man needs work for his self-realization as such, he has a right to it, that is, to a worthy occupation contributing to his perfection. It has already been seen how grave and central is the problem that there are not jobs for all and the fact that, despite your professional dedication and capacities, not all of you have access to jobs.

The solution to this very grave problem is not easy. But it should be sought by proper initiatives being set in motion by the public authorities and persons and organisms that can contribute to creating jobs permitting the unemployed to find worthy and justly rewarded activities. As my venerated predecessor Paul VI pointed out in his discourse to the International Labor Conference in 1969, there is a need for “organic participation” by all social forces and all associations engaged in finding ways to solve such excruciating problems.

Cooperatives and organizations or artisans deserve the particular attention of those with responsibility. With sufficient aid in credits and professional training, they could make a valuable contribution to alleviating the grave problem of unemployment.

Not What Is Done, but Who Does It

All you who work to win your daily bread ought to praise God for the fact you can do so worthily and honestly. Work always bears the seal of the dignity of man. It is not superior or more worthy for being objectively more important or better paid. The more humble and more fatiguing kinds of work also have personal dignity as their own sign. Do not forget, therefore, that the dignity of work does not depend so much on what is done as on who does it, and that, in man’s case, is a spiritual being who is intelligent and free. For the same reason, reject those jobs that degrade man or woman and likewise those which are contrary to the moral law, those which attack the lives of people, including the unborn.
Solidarity

On this firm base of this dignity common to all, the church’s social doctrine reminds us that solidarity is a prior requirement of love and of justice. Man must not shut himself up in his egoism, turn his back on the needs of others and the requirements of society; as the recent “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation” teaches: “The church’s doctrine is opposed to all forms of social or political individualism.” Yes, beloved workers, all egoisms, such as that of the lazy servant, of which the Gospel reading tells us, are symptoms of a weak or non-existent faith. True faith arouses awareness, in all its dramatic urgency, of the demands of love and justice, an acknowledgment of the right of the human person to be more a person and to grow in dignity, individually and collectively.

The principle of solidarity requires that particular interests submit to the general interest. This principle is valid also in regard to work and its special circumstances, both regarding pay levels and the urgency to create new jobs and acknowledge the right of those already holding jobs.

To Rural Persons

In the encyclical Laborem exercens I sought to make reference to the whole range of human activity in its broad and diverse sectors which you too represent in Colombian society. I now want to address myself in a particular way to the peasants, to whom the church dedicates special pastoral care. Men and women of the land, you perfectly accomplish the Lord’s command to subject the earth extracting from it the goods necessary for the sustenance of all. How many of you spend your lives in the hard work of the fields with insufficient wages, without hope of obtaining even the least bit of land as your own property and without benefits ever coming to you from properly programmed bold and effective agrarian reform. And you who are small land owners, how many difficulties you must face in order to obtain sufficient credit at long-term and moderate interest. What insecurity there is for the crops and risks for the very lives and integrity of persons! But these problems are aggravated even more when the scourge of unemployment reaches the countryside.

You are then assailed by the seductive temptation of the cities. There, not rarely, unfortunately, you find yourselves obliged to accept even more dehumanizing living conditions. That is no solution. With the united collaboration of all, moved by the Christian spirit, with the support of intermediate authorities and the necessary aid of state bodies, it is necessary to propose the creation of effectively functioning organizational structures. These, inspired by a will to give service free of all influences likely to distort their purposes, should dedicate themselves to seeking and
putting into practice forms which defend, safeguard and accompany assistance to the world of the peasant, so also to argument the presence of the major services, education, housing, health, security and so on.

To Labor

Men and women of industry, building, commerce, the services, your labor is the object of the pope’s concern and deserves a word of consideration and stimulus. Many of you are organized in labor unions, and I feel singular pleasure at that because here in Colombia generations of labor leaders have been formed in the church’s bosom. This entails particular demands, those of Christian commitment, for bringing “the Gospel of work” to the world of work and labor.

In this respect I want to encourage you warmly to delve more deeply into the church’s social doctrine and to put all your confidence in its orientations. These have no other aim than the good of each one in particular and society in general, as well as the dignifying of your persons and your work, recognition of your lawful rights and obligations, a just wage as concrete verification of the justice of the socio-economic system. Through these you can attain the goods which the Lord has created for all; the necessary harmony and collaboration between capital and labor; and many other aspects which are offered by social justice and the common good, in view of integral material and spiritual, economic and social, personal and community progress for all members of the community.

Just Wage and the Family

The church’s social doctrine inspires Christian praxis in its noble struggle for justice, but it excludes, because it is extraneous to the Gospel, programmed class struggle which leads to fresh forms of servitude. That social doctrine teaches that there should not be odious discrimination regarding the work men and women may do, and they should have just remuneration for it. But it likewise teaches that a just family wage ought to allow a woman who is a mother to dedicate herself to her irreplaceable tasks of caring for and bringing up children without finding herself obliged to look outside the house for a complementary income, with prejudice to her maternal functions. These ought to be socially revalued to the good of the family and society itself.

You well know that there are many children in your country who are obliged to work from a very early age so as to contribute their modest earnings to maintaining the family and themselves. Much of this work is done in scarcely healthy physical and
moral conditions. It prejudices and impedes their education and physical, psychological, and moral development. Solutions to such grave problems are urgently needed.

The Moral and Spiritual Order of Work

Beloved brothers and sisters, the church considers it its duty to speak on work from the viewpoint of its human value and the moral order. Through work you can grow close to God, the Creator and Redeemer, and share in his plan for salvation for man and the world. Christ spent the greater part of his life dedicated to manual work in his humble carpenter’s shop and was even known as “the carpenter.” In union with him you can contribute to the good of your families and all other members of society and ensure that the Creator’s work shall develop better every day through your efforts.

Just like the right man in the parable we have just heard, God has entrusted a certain number of “talents” to us, and they have to be made to bear fruit. In the first place they are the “talents” of divine grace ordered toward attaining eternal life, “talents” of intelligence, of the virtues, of the energies needed to honestly and competently carry out our work. On the other hand, together with the need to work, Holy Scripture also teaches the need for rest. My venerated predecessor John XXIII recalled how rest is a right and a necessity. Learn how to take your rest for the benefit of body and spirit, honest diversion and the unity of your families. And remember especially that as creatures and children of God, as people of God, we are urged to gather each Sunday to celebrate holy Mass as in a family. Every day we receive all from God’s hands, his providence protects us, his goodness loves us, his mercy pardons us. How can we not gather every Sunday to give thanks for these benefits and to ask pardon for our sins, to hear the Word, to celebrate his mysteries, and eat the bread of sons and daughters, “the true bread from heaven,” which the Father gives us? Do not depreciate the Sunday invitation to celebrate the Eucharist in common. It is the source of immense spiritual benefits. And bear in mind that Sunday ought to contribute to the unity of the family, not to its breakup. Uproot the terrible plague of drunkenness from among you—it brings many ills to individuals, families and society—and live in loving fidelity in your homes.

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92 Mt 6:3.


94 Jn 6:32.
Make Work a Means to Christian Perfection

Like you, Christ belongs to the world of work. As a worker, Jesus is the most eloquent “Gospel of Work” for us. Is it not really consoling and stimulating and encouraging to see the Son of God made man gaining his living with the work of his hands? He was God, “but he emptied himself and took the form of a slave”\textsuperscript{95} to redeem work from within.

Make your work lives not only be a means of gaining a livelihood and an instrument of service, make them rather a way of perfection. All work involves fatigue. This, when united with the sufferings of Christ, the redeemer of man, becomes salvific for one and all. “Do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, give thanks to God the Father through him.”\textsuperscript{96} In this fashion you too, as the good and faithful servants of the gospel parable we have been listening to, will be able to enter into the joy of the Lord because you will have caused those talents which God gave you “to bear fruit.”

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**Dialogue and Cooperation Must Support Solidarity with All Workers**\textsuperscript{97}


I thank you for the way you have endorsed the kind words of welcome addressed to me, and I trust you can see that I am very happy to be here with you. You may know that I, too, was a worker for some years in a quarry and in a factory. These were

\textsuperscript{95} Phil 2:7.

\textsuperscript{96} Col 3:17.

\textsuperscript{97} This material was delivered as an address on November 26, 1986 in Sydney, Australia, to Australian industrial workers. The text was taken from \textit{L’Osservatore Romano}, December 1, 1986, pp. 19-20.
important and useful years in my life. I am grateful for having had that opportunity to reflect deeply on the meaning and dignity of human work in its relationship to the individual, the family, the nation and the whole social order. Those years allowed me to share in a specific way in God’s creative activity and to experience work in the light of the cross and resurrection of Christ.

**Dedication to Ordinary Work**

One of my reasons for coming here is to tell you, and all the workers of Australia, how much I admire faithfulness and dedication to ordinary work. Australia is a great country because working people like yourselves go about their tasks day after day with both cheerfulness and seriousness, earning their bread by the sweat of their brow, producing goods and services for their fellow citizens, and thus gradually bringing to perfection a world that was created by a good and loving God.

No doubt many of you have reflected from time to time that Jesus Christ himself, although the Son of God, chose to be an ordinary worker for most of his earthly life, toiling away as a carpenter in Nazareth. There is no shortage of lessons to be learned from the life of Jesus the worker. It is only right, then, that this Church should bring his message into the working world and to workers. In the past, the Church has consistently opposed ways of thinking which would reduce workers to mere “things” that could be relegated to unemployment and redundancy if the economics of industrial development seemed to demand it. The students among you can consult the writings of my predecessors—going back to Leo XIII almost 100 years ago—who treated at length topics such as the rights of workers, ownership, property, working hours, just wages, and workers’ associations.

**Technology and Training**

Perhaps you have heard that five years ago I, too, wrote an encyclical letter on human work. My aim was to cast new light on the whole area of human work, an important subject where there are always fresh hopes but also fresh fears and dangers.

Among the many new elements that affect human work I wish to mention today the rapid development of technology. There is an aspect of this we can admire: in technology we can see ourselves as more than ever “subduing the earth”\(^\text{98}\) and gaining dominion over it. Technology itself is the work of human hands and human minds, and

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\(^{98}\) Gen 1:28.
it enables us to produce other beautiful and useful things. This is admirable if the human person is clearly the master. But in large factories or on extended work sites, the number, size and complexity of the machines used can make the worker seem merely a part of the machine, just another cog in the whole process of production.

Many machines these days require operators with specialized training. But after being trained for a highly skilled job, the worker may suddenly discover that a new invention has made his machine obsolete and uneconomical. He may be too old to be trained a second time, or perhaps the firm employing him may go out of business. The result is that whole industries can be dislocated, and individuals and families reduced to poverty, suffering, and despair.

Despite the complexity of the problem, we cannot give up. All the resources of human inventiveness and good will must be brought to bear, in order to help solve the social problems of our day connected with work. It is important to have clear ideas of the principles and priorities to be followed. In this context I wish to proclaim again my own profound conviction “that human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if we try to see the question really from the point of view of man’s good.”

The Human Need for Work

People need to work, not just to earn money for the necessities of life, but also to fulfill their calling to share in the creative activity of God. The human satisfaction that comes from work well done shows how profoundly the Creator has inscribed the law of work in the heart of man.

The goods of the world belong to the whole human family. Normally a person will need to work in order to have a necessary share of these good things. In the early Christian community, St. Paul insisted that willingness to work was a condition for being able to eat: “If a man will not work, let him not eat.” In special situations, society can and must assist those who are in need and cannot work. Yet even in these special circumstances, people still have a desire for personal fulfillment, and this can be achieved only through some form or other of worthwhile human activity.

Thus those who are forced to retire early, as well as those who are still young and strong but cannot find work, may experience profound discouragement and feel

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99 *Laborem exercens*, n. 3.

100 1 Thes 3:10.
that they are useless. These feelings may lead some to seek consolation in alcohol, drugs, and other forms of behavior harmful to themselves and to society.

We all need to feel that we are truly productive and useful members of our community. It is our right. And since the pace of technological change is likely to increase, it is vital for us to face all the serious problems that affect the well-being of workers.

The Human Person Is the Purpose of Work

No one has a simple and easy solution to the problems connected with human work. But I offer for your consideration two basic principles. First, it is always the human person who is the purpose of work. It must be said over and over again that work is for man, not man for work. Man is indeed “the true purpose of the whole process of production.” Every consideration of the value of work must begin with man, and every solution proposed to the problems of the social order must recognize the primacy of the human person over things.

Dialogue and Cooperation

Second, the task of finding solutions cannot be entrusted to any single group in society: people cannot look solely to governments as if they alone can find solutions, or to big business, or to small enterprises, or to union officials, or to individuals in the work force. All individuals and all groups must be concerned with both the problems and their solutions.

The Church is profoundly convinced that “the rights of the human person are the key element in the whole of the social moral order.” She has long recognized the right of workers to form associations. The purpose of such associations is to promote social justice by defending the vital interests of workers and by contributing to the common good. It is important for the members to play an active and responsible role in these associations. Hence you must make sure that the leaders of your workers’ associations really have at heart all the material and human needs of the members. They must also remember that the solution to any dispute must be fair to all sides, must serve the common good of society and must take into account the economic and social situation of the country. Only if the economy as a whole is healthy will it be possible to make sufficient work available for workers, especially the young.

\[101 \text{ Laborum exercens, n. 7.} \]

\[102 \text{ Laborum exercens, n. 17.} \]
ACHIEVING THE COMMON GOOD THROUGH SOLIDARITY

People are realizing more and more clearly that what happens in one part of the world has effects elsewhere. Worldwide problems demand worldwide solutions through the solidarity of all. No country can isolate itself from the common challenge. Union leaders and leaders of employer associations, as well as government agencies, need to work together in order to face the wide range of challenges. Every partner in this common endeavor should act on the conviction that everyone has a basic right to work in order to have a fair share of the world’s goods. It must also be stressed that all the partners have a duty to work for solutions that respect the dignity of the individual and the common good of society. Economic problems cannot be separated from the ethical and social aspects of life in society.

On the national and local level industrial relations also require a spirit of understanding and cooperation rather than one of opposition and conflict. In all disputes, a just and peaceful solution will only be possible if all parties are, and remain, ready to talk. Always keep open the lines of communication, and remember that if disputes are not solved quickly, it is above all the weak and needy who suffer.

Fortunately for Australia, your most cherished traditions place great value on equality and mutual support, especially in difficult times. The word “mate” has rich and positive connotations in your language. I pray that this tradition of solidarity will always flourish among you and will never be looked upon as old-fashioned.

Australia also has a long and proud tradition of settling industrial disputes and promoting cooperation by its almost unique system of arbitration and conciliation. Over the years this system has helped to defend the rights of workers and promote their well being, while at the same time taking into account the needs and the future of the whole community.

I make a special appeal to you workers to be always honest in your work and generous in your collaboration with others. I appeal to you to be especially conscious of all those in need, to give them practical help and to offer them your solidarity. I have been told that you have an organization for promoting development in poorer countries. For this I congratulate you and I thank you. But you must be active too in helping the needy in your own midst, who include the unemployed, many young people, aboriginal people, the sick, the disabled, the refugees, and the new settlers.

WORKER ALWAYS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PROFITS AND MACHINES

I began by making reference to the new questions and problems, fears and dangers that surround us because of the development and rapid use of the new
technology. This technology is part of the accumulated wealth of the human family and a part of it belongs to you too. It is to be judged by the help it gives you in your work and lives. Always remember that the worker is always more important than both profits and machines.

Dear friends, workers of Australia: it is up to you to make use of the new technology and press on the task of building a society of justice and fraternal love—a society that extends well beyond the boundaries of Australia. It is God himself who strengthens your arms, enlightens your minds and purifies your hearts for this great work.

**Work: A Sharing in Christ’s Mission of Service**

Those of you who believe in Jesus Christ and accept his Gospel as the blueprint of your lives know that work has an even deeper meaning when it is seen in its relationship to the Lord’s cross and resurrection. United with Christ in baptism, you are called to share through your work in Christ’s mission of salvation and service to humanity. When offered to God in union with the work of Christ, your own work takes on an even greater value and higher dignity. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who during his earthly life belonged so fully to the “working world,” looks forever with love on human work.

And for all of you in this vast land, whatever may be your religious convictions or the nature of your work, I pray that you may experience the uplifting and exhilarating awareness of working with the Creator in perfecting his design and plan for the world. All of this is part of the dignity of human work, the dignity of man and the dignity of each and every worker in Australia!
Unemployment Is an Evil That Must Be Combated Through Training


I am very happy to be with you, the young people of the Wilson Training Center. You are here to improve your skills so that you may be better equipped to find work. I encourage you with all my heart. I greet the staff of Centacare, which for over a quarter of a century has been providing services for family and social needs, particularly, in recent years, in relation to the problem of unemployment. I am aware of the important assistance given by the government and the whole community for the running of this center. I sincerely trust that your efforts will be rewarded and your hopes fulfilled.

The Human Problem of Unemployment

The nature of this center leads me directly to the theme of our meeting today: the very serious question of unemployment, or rather the situation of the men and women who are suffering the effects of unemployment.

It is precisely as a human problem, a problem affecting the life and dignity of human beings, a problem with a decidedly ethical and moral character, that the church approaches the question of unemployment. The Church has a mission of service to the whole human family. It is above all a religious and moral mission, linked to the redemption of the human race through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church knows that the call to accept the redemption reaches human beings in the actual circumstances of everyday life. And man’s eternal destiny is closely connected with all the elements that affect human freedom, human rights and human advancement. Work—or the lack of work—is one such element, a most important one.

Unemployment is the privation of all the values that work represents and contributes to individuals, families and society. Work is a right and a duty. Elsewhere

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This material was delivered as an address on November 27, 1986 in Hobart, Australia, to trainees at an employment training center. The text was taken from Origins, December 11, 1986, p. 16.
I have said that “man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society to which he belongs, the country of which he is a citizen and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him. All this constitutes the moral obligation of work.”

**Work Humanizes and Redeems**

When we speak of the moral obligation to work, we mean that everyone has the duty to share in some real way in the great task of “humanizing” the universe, that is, of making the world a more hospitable place and a better instrument of personal and social development. It is also true that “work is a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being.’”

The sweat and toil which work necessarily involves in the present condition of the human race mean that the Christian can share in the work that Christ came to do. Christ saved the world by suffering and dying on the Cross. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, the Son of God, man collaborates with him for the redemption of humanity. He shows that he is a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross of work every day in the activity that he is called upon to perform.

**Work and Family**

Work has other implications. It is an important condition of family life, since the family needs the means of subsistence, the money which is usually earned through the work of one or more of its members. In fact, the family is a community made possible by work, and at the same time it is the first school of work, within the home, for every person.

Today the presence of women and mothers in almost every sector of the working

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104 *Laborem exercens*, n. 16.

105 *Laborem exercens*, n. 9.

106 *Laborem exercens*, n. 27.

107 *Laborem exercens*, n. 10.
world is a fact that has to be considered. They should be able to exercise their gifts and abilities in various forms of employment, but at the same time due respect must be given to their obligations and aspirations. Work should be so structured that women do not have to bargain for their advancement at the expense of their own dignity or at the expense of their role inside the family.

The mother’s role needs to be socially reevaluated. Her tasks in the home require a great commitment; they demand much time and love. Children need care, love, and affection. This attention must be given if children are to develop into secure, responsible persons with moral, religious, and psychological maturity. While the responsibility for family development rests on both mother and father, still very much depends on the specific mother/child relationship.  

Society can take credit when it enables mothers to devote time to their children and bring them up in accordance with their progressive needs. The freedom of women as mothers must be clearly protected, so that they are free from psychological or any other form of discrimination, especially by comparison with women without family obligations. Mothers must not be financially penalized by the very society which they serve in a most exalted and necessary way.

Work and the Disabled

A further point I wish to make concerns the disabled. They are citizens with full rights, and they should be helped to have a real share in the life of society. It would be radically unworthy of man and a denial of our common humanity to deny disabled people access to the full life of the community in accordance with their possibilities and potential. To do so would be to practice a serious form of discrimination. Here is a clear case in which work, in the objective sense, should be subordinated to the dignity of man, to the person who works and not to economic advantage.

Generosity towards Immigrants

Since World War II, Australia has shown great generosity in opening its doors to immigrants from other countries and to refugees seeking a new homeland. In return, these new Australians have contributed their own culture and working skills toward the

\[108\] Laborem exercens, n. 19; Familiaris consortio, n. 23.

\[109\] Familiaris consortio, n. 22.
development and enrichment of their new land. It is important that in the matter of working rights, those who began their working lives in other lands should not be put at a disadvantage in comparison with other workers. This matter too calls for generosity on the part of Australian society. The value of work should not be measured by differences of nationality, sex, religion, or race.

The Scourge of Unemployment

In a sense, unemployment is a modern phenomenon. Demographic and technological changes have produced a situation in which there is not sufficient work for all those capable of it. It is a worldwide phenomenon. It is particularly serious in the Third World countries which have not yet reached an adequate stage of economic development and in which there are large numbers of young people looking for work. But it is almost as bad in many industrialized nations, for very complex reasons which it is not possible to analyze here.

In Australia, too, the pain of unemployment is suffered by many of you and your fellow citizens, and not just the young, but also by men and women who are breadwinners for their families. Even when social services help to provide the bare necessities of life, being unemployed cuts into their dignity as persons and seriously curtails their chances and opportunities in life.

Training Is a Key to Sustained Employment

Unemployment brings many evils to a community and to a nation. It causes economic and social inequality. It can cause such stress to the family and society that there follows a real breakdown of the institutions that should ensure human advancement. Those who have work may forget those who do not.

The problem calls for the cooperation in planning and positive action by all agencies. Government departments, large companies, and small businesses, employers’ federations, unions and their alliances—all of these have a crucial part to play in finding solutions. The media too can provide positive support and information by promoting programs for the unemployed. Justice demands a concerted effort by everyone. Christ’s commandment of love urges all Christians to act together on behalf of the unemployed.

Retraining programs are already under way in this country. Governments and private organizations sponsoring them are to be congratulated. Such programs are of special importance since they acknowledge the needs of the young upon whom the
But the needs of the older unemployed must not be overlooked. There are indications that in recent years the numbers of unemployed have increased as well as the average duration of unemployment. This means that many people can be excluded from the labor market for almost their whole working lives with little hope of regaining regular employment.

Some statistics present a bleak picture for thousands of people who would be only too happy to work. Powerful efforts must be made to find new means of meeting this situation so that older workers' skills may be reused, or new skills taught to them. Most of all they need the practical help that will rekindle their enthusiasm and motivation to be engaged in creative work.

In programs of training and retraining, it is important to follow the principle of self-help. This policy safeguards the individual's dignity. All are encouraged to use their abilities to the full, and to realize that their unemployed status is not a matter of personal failure.

Above all, efforts must be made to create new jobs. This is a most difficult point. We all recognize that the creation of new work in our modern society has become a most complex matter. Very often it is no longer merely a matter of local or even national willingness and capability. It requires a reordering and adjustment of economic structures and priorities on a global level.

The Human Dimension of Unemployment

The Church does not have technical solutions to offer nor the means to resolve such problems. But in her service to humanity she has a most important task: to remind those involved at every level of economic activity that unemployment cannot be treated solely as an issue of economics. Unemployment is a human problem of vast dimensions.

The Church can and does offer a social teaching. It is based on the inviolable dignity of every human person. Work is seen as collaboration with the Creator and is a condition of the self-development which is the right of every individual. The Church seeks to motivate and educate so that qualified and faith-inspired Christians will help to find solutions to the urgent problem of unemployment.

Sometimes the local churches are in a position to start or collaborate in concrete programs of service to the unemployed. Centacare, the Catholic Church's family
agency in the Archdiocese of Hobart, which established and administers Wilson Training Center, is a praiseworthy example of this kind of endeavor. Other worthy forms of service elsewhere also deserve great support.

Young people of this center, friends of Tasmania, and of all Australia: in your efforts to combat unemployment and to find work, know that the Church is with you. She understands your aspirations, and she appeals on your behalf and on behalf of all the unemployed to the conscience of the world. The Church appeals for a new vision of work centered on the value and dignity of the human person. She appeals for a reordering of the economic order so that it will truly serve the integral well-being of the human family.

To all of you—the staff at Centacare and the Wilson Training Center, and you young people training for work—to the unemployed, to all who are seeking solutions to the problem of unemployment in Australia, to those serving the needs of individuals and families suffering from unemployment—to all of you I offer my encouragement. Do not lose heart! The Church will work with you and for you. And she will continue to call for the solidarity of all in this matter that so closely touches your lives. Be assured of my prayers and support. In the name of Jesus Christ I invoke upon you strength and courage.

56.

FAITH HELPS US PENETRATE THE DIGNITY OF WORK


I wish to take in all of you in an embrace of brotherhood, since I am aware of your problems and anxieties, but also of your pride in the dignity that is yours in the various spheres of your activity. For every worker is a witness to the value that his work has, because work is a reality that is closely united to man and to his identity.

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110 This material was delivered as an address on March 19, 1987 in Civitavecchia, Italy, to Civitavecchian workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, April 6, 1987, p.
Work permits each one to be himself, because it sets him free from poverty, guarantees his livelihood more securely and enables and encourages him to have a valuable and conscious share in social responsibilities, far removed from all oppression, and sheltered from situations that are an offense to his dignity. In work, a culture comes to development—I mean the awareness that one has a responsible role within the sphere of material and spiritual values, with the possibility and the advantage of having more, in order to be more.

**Good Work Leads to Authentic Human Fulfillment**

I wish to assert this today, on the feast of St. Joseph, who worked beside Jesus for so many years, a partner in the same professional work carried out by the Son of God, made man, a witness to the humility and the physical labors of Jesus within the walls of the house of Nazareth. Joseph was the first to receive the substance and the sublimity of the “Gospel of Work” from the direct testimony of the Lord, and he was therefore able to discern in the hard work of Jesus the human, religious, and salvific meaning of the daily toil. “Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Redeemer of all men, was a worker for so many years of his life. The work of Jesus the worker belongs in this way to the work of the redemption of man, of the divine redemption of man.”

**The Transcendent Nature of the Person**

In the light of Christ, the Redeemer of man and of human work, with the example before our eyes of St. Joseph, the humble carpenter who realized his own dignity as one who was free and responsible precisely in his daily toil, the Pope speaks to you today, men and women workers, to tell you of all the esteem that the Church has for you and for the contribution which you make to social well-being. In her dialogue with the world of work, the Church feels it to be her own mission—one that is particularly urgent today—to assert strongly and clearly the dignity and the centrality of the value of the person. For this reason, she warns against every attempt to reduce man to a simple cog in the great machine of production. Man has his place within the process of production, but he is not reducible to this: he transcends it, because man is not only matter, but is also spirit; as such, he bears a destiny that points him beyond the horizon of time, towards eternity.

It is, accordingly, with lively hope that the Church encounters today, in all the sectors of human life—including that of work—numerous signs of a new hunger and
thirst for transcendence and for the divine. The world of work seems each day to
discover more of the importance of God’s place in life, and seeks to become a
community based on solidarity and brotherly love.

Dignity of Work Derives from the Dignity of the Person

It is only if the world of work fully recovers awareness of the vertical dimension
of man that it will be able to affirm fully the dignity of work and to defend this dignity
against the attacks that are made against it from various quarters. The dignity of work
does not depend on the activity in which the work is expressed, but on the subject who
carries out the activity and puts into the activity something of himself, of his own
intelligence and creativity. We defend the dignity of work, therefore, by defending
the dignity of man. The dignity of man has its basis in the fact that he is made “in the
image and likeness of God.” To recognize this divine reflection that shines out in every
human being means to establish the basic source of all the social claims that are made
necessary by the safeguarding of the rights of the worker.

Divine Justice

Men and women of the world of work, I speak to you with great openness: God
is on your side! Faith in him does not suffocate your rightful claims, but rather gives
them a basis, an orientation and a support. God remains the supreme guarantor of your
rights. It is therefore before his tribunal that every person must appear one day to
render account for the injustices perpetrated against his fellows.

In one believes in God, therefore, one will be ready even today to ask questions
about oneself and about one’s own way of entering into relationships with others in
every sphere of life, but especially in the sphere of work. Faith does not deaden
awareness. Rather, it stimulates it to seek continually the conditions that are more in
keeping with the innate dignity of a being endowed with intelligence and liberty, and
therefore capable of living his own life responsibly.

This innate dignity of man must find its principal expression in work. This has
to be said with special force today, when the ever more rapid progress of technology
risks the suffocation of the worker, isolating and marginalizing him. One can see on
the horizon the danger of a new slavery of work, the consequence of a productive
structure in which the person, with his capacity of initiative and responsibility, is ever
less involved. The solution to this problematic tension is not to be sought in a slowing
down or even a halting of technological development. It will be found rather in the
continual commitment to give the worker new skills and to create ever greater areas in
which he can play a conscious and responsible part in the direction of the firm.
In this battle to safeguard the dignity of the worker, believers must be in the front line, since they recognize the primordial design of God in his dealings with man. Do we not read on the first page of the Bible the commandment to “fill the earth and subdue it”? Man is called to be God’s collaborator in the work of creation. Every productive activity must therefore be structured in such a way that it is worthy of a “collaborator of God!”

Stewardship of Resources

Among the problems that assail man today, you are aware here at Civitavecchia in a particularly vivid manner of the problem of the provision of energy. We see a constant increase in the demand for energy, caused by the growth of industrialization and by a higher individual consumption that is connected with the expansion of the population and the improvement in living standards. This is a problem that is the direct responsibility of the public authorities and also involves the field of scientific research.

It falls to me to underline the duty—in cumbent on all of us—to have respect for the goods which God has created and willed to put at the service of all. In point of fact, however, truly frightening and disturbing levels of pollution of the natural environment have been reached. This situation, which obviously concerns the whole world, risks finding its first victims precisely among the workers. It is necessary to call into being a new type of collaboration among scientists, to avoid an irreversible development which would entail mortal risks for all mankind. Our planet would very soon be uninhabitable, if we were to refuse to look diligently for means to correct the negative effects of the various technologies. It is necessary to display, in responding to the questions about safety, a commitment equal to that displayed hitherto in the promotion of the interests of energy and production, in order to guarantee the respect and the conservation of all the possibilities and beauties of the universe.

We live in a world that must be appreciated and respected, and we must not yield to the temptation to alter its balance. Scholars and scientists everywhere, no matter what their specific interests, should feel themselves profoundly challenged by the growing demand for energy which is urgently posed by the needs of modern society; but they should also pay due attention to the vital requirement that the essential balance of nature should not be disturbed; this is the first condition that guarantees the construction of a world of justice and peace, in which man can be the conscious subject and artisan of technological progress in a harmonious relationship with the cosmos.
Chapter III: Addresses to Workers

Creation Reveals God’s Order

Every workman, everyone who works in industry and the production of energy, is also a human being continually in touch with the reality of creation and with its laws. The world which surrounds us and on which we act with our work, together with the impressive energies within nature, continually reveals to us the marvelous order willed by God. Out of this daily contact, even though it takes place in hard toil, man comes to know the physical world, but is also brought to meditate on the relationship that it has with God, and to recognize the infinite power of the Creator and Lawgiver of the universe. Every worker can thus see himself as a sharer in a divine plan, and can accept with gratitude the sublime mission to “subdue and dominate what is created” in order to employ all the riches of the cosmos for the advantage of man. We can say that a religious context is disclosed here, in which every worker discovers the presence and the value of a serious and binding moral commitment; the commitment to use all technologies and discoveries for the greater good of humanity. In the contact with the forces of the universe, which reveal themselves to be ever more surprising and precious, every worker senses how great is the responsibility of all to act in accordance with the order established by God.

Work is a duty given by God, and a necessity imposed by the many needs of existence; but it is also a way to set out on a common path, collaborating with love and respect for the good of all. Men and women workers of Civitavecchia, open your hearts to brotherhood and solidarity, following the model of Christ! Accept the message which the pages of the Gospel continually address to you!
57.

**Work is Humanized by Safeguarding the Dignity and Solidarity of Workers**


I have said on another occasion that the years I spent as a laborer in a chemical plant gave me a new lesson about the Gospel. It is true, because in that environment, in that period of forced labor, I realized the profound relationship of solidarity that exists between the Gospel and the problems connected with human work in our times. It is not a new theoretical observation; it is a joyful human and Christian reality which the Church, now on the threshold of the third millennium, is seriously bound to spread. Then it can be known and experienced by men and women of the world of labor. I encourage you today, that each worker make the “inner effort in order that work may be given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God.”

**Bringing the Gospel to Human Work**

Work is like a “vocation” or a call, which elevates a person to become a sharer in the creative action of God. It is the means that God offers to man to “subdue” the earth, discover its secrets, transform it, enjoy it and to this way, enrich his own personality. His model is Christ, the Redeemer of man, who did not refuse to spend a great part of his life in the carpenter’s shop, and thus redeemed the effort and the dignity of work, transforming it forever into an instrument of redemption.

In the letters that many of you sent to Rome in connection with this pastoral visit, you stated in clear terms the circumstances, desires, the sad situations, as well as the hopes that lie in your hearts.

In my frequent meetings with workers from all over the world, I sometimes hear

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112 This material was delivered as an address on April 10, 1987 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to workers. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 18, 1987, p. 8.

113 *Laborem exercens*, n. 24.
reasons for sadness, discouragement and despair; these come, to a great extent, from the growing problem of unemployment. Certainly the world of labor gives us serious reasons for worry; I know them well. However, it is no less certain that such reasons should not lead you to feel defeated, to assume an attitude of passivity or hopelessness. Our Catholic faith provides us with enough reasons why we should never despair, no matter how difficult or hard any situation may seem.

**Work Contributes to the Spirit**

In the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, I pointed out to the world of production a concrete and clear objective: that human activity consider, above all, personal values. “If this is not done, incalculable damage is inevitably done throughout the economic process, not only economic damage but first and foremost damage to man.”114

Furthermore, I am inviting you today not to conform to an impoverished and deformed vision of work; but my wish is that you enter deeply into the profound richness that can contribute to the life and spirit of each person. The manner in which you understand this point determines considerably not only the meaning of your life, but also the range and the results of your labor organizations and union involvement.

**Profit Cannot Be the Only Motive**

You are aware of the fact that when the socio-economic world is organized for the exclusive motive of profit, proper human dimensions suffer a loss. Such a situation could lead to a lack of interest in the quality of work, and thus prejudice the greatly desired cohesion and solidarity of the workers. Some claim that the only reason for your life is money and consumerism; if you allow yourselves to be polarized by this exclusive motivation, you are unable to discover personal satisfaction and service which the exercise of your profession includes.

**Build a Community of Work**

This is why I insist that you cannot conform to certain short-term objectives, whose purpose can be reduced to collective bargaining about wages and lessening of working hours. In the face of the problems of modern society, do not allow the

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114 *Laborem exercens*, n. 15.
greater effort of labor organizations to be made sterile by ineffective political disputes, which often make your aspirations tools to achieve advantageous positions. Justice requires that there be honest union debate, but it should lead to the attainment of objectives proper to the world of labor, and directed to the strengthening of solidarity and the raising of the level of the material and spiritual life of the workers. Certainly the intimate relationship between the world of labor and political life, the so-called indirect employer, demands constant contact and dialogue between workers and politicians. It should always be a constructive dialogue, which should consider not only the interests of the group, but the welfare of the great Argentinean family, in the Latin American perspective and even in that of the whole world.

Your county, your society, enjoys a strong and dynamic labor organization which, as you know, constitutes an “indispensable element of social life.”[^115] That element, however, even if it is indispensable, cannot be identified with the struggle of social classes; such an idea is ideologically and historically unsatisfactory, and its worst consequences lead to the disadvantage of men and women workers.

“It is characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people. In this consists its social power: the power to build a community.”[^116] In the same way, the fruits of your organization should always be constructive, so that its total effectiveness is placed at the service of the person, the family and the whole society, and they are not used against the community or the individual.

**Promote the Dignity of the Person**

The great goal of the union must be the development of the person, of all workers: therefore new “movements of solidarity in the sphere of work can be necessary.”[^117] The Pope encourages you to make a further step in solidarity; he wants to inspire you to make ever greater efforts to promote the inalienable dignity of man, of every man, of every worker, and always contribute to his personal fulfillment. This is the only way that you will fulfill your mission to promote and defend “the vital interests of those employed in the various professions.”[^118] It would be a shame if solidarity among workers breaks down when the working conditions become degrading.

[^115]: *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.

[^116]: *Laborem exercens*

[^117]: *Laborem exercens*, n. 8.

[^118]: *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.
or when there is an increase in abuses and arrogance in those who, from their positions of advantage, appropriate rights that in no way belong to them. Neither should there be a lack of solidarity in those wide areas of misery and hunger, which would be the same as the inhuman treatment of workers and their families. Thus the organizational strength of workers should reach even those places in order to attain certain conditions that will free the persons from their miserable situation.

Wherever there is a father or a mother of a family who, because of circumstances, cannot fulfill the responsibility to earn enough to live in dignity with his or her loved ones, the solidarity of working men and women should also reach those situations.

Say “Enough” to Injustice!

Does it seem logical to you that the solidarity of workers be reduced to inactivity, or that it only proposes and considers short-term goals, when the needs of so many workers are urgent? No Christian should remain insensitive to the needs of others, because he knows that before God the value of his behavior depends on the love that he offers others.¹¹⁹ Now, if charity is the greatest commandment for us, how can one remain uninvolved before injustice, if justice is the fundamental motive and the first fruit of charity?

The service that your organizational strength can give to man, and with him to the community, demands a serious commitment from each one of you, that will lead you to say “enough!” to everything that may be a clear violation of the dignity of the worker.

Enough, to a reductive conformism, which proposes monetary remuneration and less working hours as the only objectives for the labor organization, silencing every dialogue that may have the person and his dignity in life and profession as the central issues.

Enough, to certain situations in which the rights of labor are harshly subordinated to economic systems, which seek exclusively the greatest profit, without considering the moral quality of the means that are used to obtain it.

Enough, to a labor system which obliges mothers of families to work long hours outside their homes, thus neglecting their functions in the home; which does not value

¹¹⁹ Mt 25:33-40.
sufficiently work in agriculture; which marginalizes less capable persons; which discriminates against immigrants.

Enough, to the practice in which the right to work is at the discretion of transitory economic or financial circumstances, which do not take into consideration the fact that the full employment of the work force should be the primary objective of every social organization.

Enough, to the manufacture of products that endanger peace and seriously threaten public morality, even including the health of specific sectors of the population.

Enough, also, to the lack of solidarity in the world distribution of food; to the lack of systematic recognition of labor organizations in many countries of the world; and in this International Year of the “Homeless,” enough also to the pressing situation of the lack of dignity in the physical living conditions of workers in so many suburbs of the great cities.

However, do not forget that this commitment acquires its strength, above all, from an attitude of personal solidarity. You must overcome the tendency to remain unknown in human relations; you must make a positive effort to transform “solitude” into “solidarity,” looking for occasions for exchange, understanding, confidence, mutual help, and fostering friendship.

**Solidarity Is the Fundamental Structure of Work**

The fundamental objective of your involvement should be to humanize economic activity and the world of work. Therefore you should achieve, little by little, the gradual harmonization of work relationships with what I called in the encyclical *Laborem exercens* “the fundamental structure of all work,” which is a structure of unity, collaboration and solidarity.

A basic principle of this action of solidarity in labor organization consists in the conscious decision “to consider man not according to whether or not he is useful in his work, but to consider work in its relation to man with everyman, to consider work according to whether or not it is useful to man.” Solidarity, precisely, is to make room for persons in society, in labor activity, so that in these environments of basic

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120 *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.

121 Speech to the International Labor Organization, 15 June 1982.
life, everyone can conduct himself with the awareness and responsibility of acting as persons.

The strength of labor is very great; and, when it is used positively, it is capable of transforming itself into a basic factor for the construction of a community in which the principal social questions are answered according to the principles of justice and equity.

In your efforts to practice solidarity, you will succeed little by little in containing the effects of degradation or exploitation, and the unions will be strong factors in the construction of social justice, in the recognition of the just rights of workers and of the dignity and the true welfare of society. Therefore, without confusing your action of solidarity with political activity, you will influence society more effectively than if you tried to act directly in political life solely from the union organization.

As you know very well, this is why you should not allow your efforts to be transformed into a kind of group or class “selfishness.” Even when the purpose of a specific action is to safeguard the rights of a person or a working class, that objective must not be in opposition to the common good of the whole society. Neither should you forget solidarity with those persons who, for various reasons, are not members of your organizational force. Your support of those who are weaker will be proof that your solidarity is authentic.

In the gospel of work we find the most convincing example of solidarity: Almighty God, whose greatness transcends man completely, became flesh out of love, out of solidarity, and worked just like any other person. Jesus Christ is the best example of the unlimited solidarity which workers are called to imitate. Wherever a man or a woman develops an activity, works and suffers, Christ is present there.

Human Work Is Fundamental to the Plan of God

The Church, faithful to her divine Founder, has respected and always promoted the dignity of labor. She has done this by restoring the fundamental role that belongs to human work in the designs of God. She has done it by extolling the achievements of human intelligence, particularly in the field of science and technology; she has done it by showing her special love for all workers and in particular those who are more severely tried by fatigue, like manual laborers and farmers. She has done it by

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122 *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.
listening to their complaints and safeguarding their interests and their legitimate aspirations. She has done it by drawing closer to the world of labor, both in the shanty-towns and the humble “ranchitos,” or in their comfortable residences, in order to help them both materially and spiritually, warn them of so many dangers, preserve their moral and social values and raise their living conditions.

Today, it is the Pope who comes to you to honor in you all those who are serving in the great task to which all of us are called, that is, to transform the world according to the designs of God. I come to discover in your faces the features of the face of Jesus of Nazareth, and to exhort you to respond with a deep sense of responsibility to the mission to which God has called you, that you may become the builders of the Argentina of today and of tomorrow.

58.

HUMAN PERSONS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CARE AND WISE USE OF THE EARTH AND ITS RESOURCES

Collaboration with God, Dominion over the Earth, Environment.

In young people the Church always sees the future, creativity, the hope of a better world, placing particular confidence in the movements which are clearly and generously inspired along the perennial lines of the great Christian principles.

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123 This material was delivered as an address on January 9, 1988 in Rome, to youth attending the Italian National Congress of The Proprietor Farmers’ Organization. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, February 1, 1988, p. 7.
Nature Is God’s Gift

In this regard I warmly encourage you never to lose sight of the fundamental principle: God has given nature to humanity as a gift.

God created the earth, the waters, creatures of the sea, earth and air, the rivers, mountains and plains with immutable laws, and through many yet unexplored directions of physics and biology. It was God who formed the human person, placing him, as Scripture marvelously expresses it, in a garden, so that he could “cultivate and care for it.”

Human Persons Are Collaborators but Not Masters

The human person, therefore, is a collaborator and craftsman, but not the absolute master, neither of himself nor of things, which he is called in turn to mold so that the garden may become more bountiful. The earth which he has received as a gift must be subjected to the “dominion” of the human person in the framework of the divine plan, or else his role as collaborator will be compromised.

For these reasons the Church has always been close to farm laborers and has never ceased to raise her voice, in her social documents, against the injustices, both open and hidden, which are so frequently committed against the rural workers in regard to those who work in other sectors. For the same reasons, in my encyclical on human work, I paused to emphasize the “fundamental importance” of agricultural work in the context of the development of the social community.

Dear young people, I am confident that the very mention of these basic considerations can be a stimulus and light for you in the course of your thorough discussions in this congress.

Human Responsibility for the Resources of the Earth

The earth and natural elements do not constitute merely a factor of production that is indispensable to the maintenance of physical life, the sustenance of families, and

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125 Gen 1:31.
126 Laborem exercens, n. 21.
economic and social prosperity, but also one of the instruments capable of giving security and impetus to the growth of the individual as a human person.

The resources spread about on the surface and wisely hidden by God in the depths of the earth should be discovered and evaluated in the service of the person, family, and society in an organic way. The human person has the task of intervening in the natural environment to adapt it to proper higher demands and to care for it as a source of income, without ever compromising its characteristic as an instrument of human and community development.

For this reason the rational care of the environment is necessary. Wherever this does not occur, the human person abdicates his role as regards nature, according to the clear design of God, and uncontrollable selfishness and unbridled material interest triumph.

Unfortunately this happens all too often today. The use of resources with no consideration for the environmental and human context mars the beauty of the countryside, upsets the vital dynamic equilibrium and causes pollution and breakdown, harming natural processes and threatening the survival of living things.

The earth thus loses its face, created by God, a garden at the service of the human person, to become merely a source of economic exploitation, an abandoned desert.

Dear young people, in thanking you for your visit, your demonstration of homage and devotion, I hope that your reflections will bring about concrete ideas for the spread of an environmental culture and plans for collaboration with the forces of good will. May the earth flourish again as a garden for all; may the Lord see that people also make good things.
59.

FAMILY AND WORK ARE FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE


“The family and the world of work”: these are two interrelated themes which, in this first decade of my pastoral service in the See of Peter and his successor, I have always borne in mind, indeed favored. I wish to return to them at this meeting of ours as well. I know that your diocesan synod is dealing with them. Hence I, too, would like to make my contribution to a pastoral matter of such importance.

Family and Work Are Interdependent

Our essential point of reference here is the solemn divine imperative that includes the account of the creation of the world and of man in the first chapter of Genesis: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” In the wondrous context in which these words are pronounced, they express, in the light of God’s revelation, the relation existing between the primordial human family (“Be fruitful”) and work (“Subdue the earth”). The growth of the human family to the point of filling the earth and “subduing” the earth through work are intimately connected objectives which proceed together historically, in reciprocal interdependence. The divine command thus shows itself to be intrinsic to man’s specific nature and worthy of the unique value of the human person.

In speaking of work, I mean to refer to all the dimensions in which it has developed and been transformed through the centuries: work in the various areas of agriculture, craftsmanship, industry, technology, professional life, culture and art. We are dealing with a “fundamental dimension of man’s existence on earth.” The vocation to work is inserted in him from the beginning as a natural predisposition.

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127 This material was delivered as an address on June 5, 1988 in Piacenza, Italy, to agricultural workers. The translation was taken from The Pope Speaks, Winter 1988, pp. 304-308.

128 Gen 1:26.

129 Laborem exercens, n. 4.
Chapter III: Addresses to Workers

Speaking in Fiorano, I referred mainly to the industrial and technological sector; here in Piacenza, my attention turns rather to agricultural work, in relation to the necessary revitalization of the rural world.

The Value of Agricultural Work

... Still, even among you there can be noted, as an element almost of imbalance, the marked concentration of residents in tertiary activities, especially in the areas of public administration and commerce. It is not pointless, then, to call attention to the lack of appreciation, from the social point of view, for farm work. So prevalent is this attitude that it makes farmers feel like second-class citizens. It thus becomes more difficult to resist the temptation to abandon rural areas for anonymous urban industrial agglomerates and administrative centers.

It is therefore necessary to regenerate the civic conscience and the awareness of the primary value of agricultural work. I wish to reaffirm in your presence what I wrote in the encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, so as to encourage those who have remained faithful to the earth and those who are recovering the taste for rural work: “The world of agriculture, which provides society with the goods it needs for its daily sustenance, is of fundamental importance.” It is necessary “to restore to agriculture—and to rural people—their just value as the basis for a healthy economy, within the social community’s development as a whole. Thus it is necessary to proclaim the dignity of work, of all work but especially of agricultural work, in which man so eloquently ‘subdues’ the earth he has received as a gift from God.”

Work Is for Man and for the Family

God says: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” There is in fact an intimate relation between work and the fruitfulness of man destined to fill the earth. Indeed the human person, the active subject of the process of work, is not an isolated entity, but is always placed in the context of his family, which forms his constant point of reference. This is a dynamic force of the human conscience, to whose voice workers are particularly attuned. What they sense most of all is precisely that bond that unites work and family. Work is for man and for the family, because the

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130 *Laborem exercens*, n. 21.

131 *Laborem exercens*, n. 21.

132 Gen 1:28.
family is first of all man’s proper place. It is the vital world in which he is conceived and born and in which he matures. It is the environment for which he assumes his most serious responsibility: the place of earthly happiness and human hope, which opens out to eternal hope.

The Real Meaning of Work and Family

The intimate connection between work and family, these two fundamental dimensions of human existence, becomes fully evident if they are considered in their precise meanings. On the one hand, work is to be understood as the activity through which the person realizes himself and thus fulfills the vocation that is his by reason of his very humanity. Work, then, is an experience in which one discovers his dependence on the Giver of all the resources of creation and his “interdependence” with others, and the consequent laws of “solidarity.”

On the other hand, the family is to be understood as the project of God’s love for the love between man and woman, and thus as their vocation from “the beginning.” The human person, who cannot live if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, discovers in this way that his very work is ordered to the expression of love. Work is for the family inasmuch as work is for the person, who is ordered to the family.

Technology Must Respect the Dignity of the Human Person

It is therefore necessary that the process of production adapt itself to this objective structure of human existence.

In Europe we are perhaps witnessing the conclusion of what history will recall as the age of industrialization: new forms of work, such as computer science and satellite communication, will give a new appearance to the activity of production. However, it must not be forgotten that in its early stages industrialization was often a brutal and dehumanizing social phenomenon. It was a time of cruel exploitation, even where the ruling ideologies preached the liberation of the oppressed.

The technological revolution now advancing has already reached a point of great turbulence in the field of genetic technology, in which the very structure of living things, including man, is at stake.

133 Sollicitudo rei socialis, n. 35.
134 Mt 19:4.
To avoid the repetition of the errors of the first industrial revolution, or even worse errors, it is absolutely necessary that technology does not proceed devoid of spiritual and transcendent values, but that it let itself be guided and permeated by them. It is absolutely essential that biomedicine and the relative technologies accept the directives of right reason, directives which the Magisterium of the Church proposes concerning respect for the sacredness of human life.

**Women and the Gospel of Work**

Finally, there is a theme that is particularly close to my heart: that of women and work. The gospel of work has a particular value for women: it seeks to attach new esteem, on the social plane, to the motherly tasks specific to women, to the toil and risks inherent in them, to the needs of children for care and love in order that they may develop as responsible, balanced, and mature persons.

It is not a question, as some have insinuated, of binding women to the role of housewife; nor is it a question of excluding them from work outside the home or of assigning them only family duties. Since man and woman enjoy equal dignity, both having been created in God’s image, the whole gamut of human activities is and must be open to women, whether in the economic, social, cultural, or political realm. However, for women there is a specific activity that regards her as “mother of all living.” In that activity, woman reaches her highest self-expression; so it is just that the state and society sustain her in the performance of that task specific to her with the social provisions from which women working outside the home benefit.

**Mutual Collaboration of Women and Men**

Still, I repeat that it is not a question of shutting the woman between the four walls of the home or of charging her with the entire educational duty within the family. Within the conjugal community the equal personal dignity of the man and the woman must be recognized in full and mutual love. The constant collaboration of the parents is thus necessary in the education of the children. The active presence of the father is of great help in their formation; but the presence and care of the mother, of whom little children have a special need, must be safeguarded. Her presence in the home must be facilitated, without neglecting, however, her legitimate social advancement.

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135 Gen 1:27.
It is not a question, then, of schematic role divisions, but of mutual collaboration in the family and in society, according to the various conditions and circumstances, with full equality and responsibility, and with attention to the needs of the family — the school of humanity and the foundation of society.

Workers Are Witnesses to the Gospel

Much remains to be done to assure human work of its full dignity. I charge you, Christian workers, to be witnesses to the Gospel in your work settings: proclaim the name of Christ in your factories and offices, and on your farm. Draw your inspiration from Him who became a “worker” for us.\(^{137}\)

Act in such a way that work becomes an effective means of developing in yourselves a strong and generous personality, and of establishing firm bonds within your families, which constitute the primary purpose of your labors. May the family truly become for you the “domestic Church,” in which daily labors find their justification and meaning; may the Spirit of God fill you with ardor for this great mission!

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\(^{137}\) Mk 5:3.

\(^{138}\) This material was delivered as an address on October 10, 1988 in Strasbourg, France, to French boatmen and dock workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, November 14, 1988, pp. 17, 20.
we admire the ingenuity and efficiency of human activity. The water flow has been regulated to protect the land from flooding and to facilitate navigation. Cities, cultures and industry have profited from the abundance of water. The energy of the previously reduced water levels has become useful and productive energy.

Care of Natural Resources

It is true that the very life of the river and the quality of its water have suffered from a sometimes imprudent or excessive use. We must learn lessons from the pernicious effects of certain industrial activities. I wish that you may continue these positive efforts already undertaken to fight against the pollution of the Rhine. Nature is put at our disposal; may we be capable of being the enlightened and respectful managers of a good which must keep its fruitfulness for the generations to come.

The Importance of the Rhine River and Those Who Work on It

Throughout Europe the Rhine follows a path traced throughout history by the soldiers and merchants of various countries in their time. As its juridical status recognizes, its waters are a common patrimony par excellence. There is nothing more obviously international than the waters of such a river, to the point that at a very early stage the nations reached an agreement to regulate navigation together and to create the historically most ancient European international organization. In continuing to develop its activity, you give a good example of cooperation in this continent which is in the process of progressing towards unity.

By the efforts of the boatmen, which were for a long time accomplished amid very hazardous conditions, the Rhine represents for several countries a source of multiple material and cultural riches. The transportation and trade of merchandise are naturally accompanied by intellectual, artistic and spiritual exchange. Is there not a true relationship between the cities of the Rhine, even if history has sometimes found them in opposition to one another?

Craftsmen of International Bonds

Dear friends, boatmen and port workers, you are the effective craftsmen of international bonds which this great river affords. Your many tasks complement one another and allow you to help to create a vast economic network. By being involved in it, you constitute an attractive human environment and you manifest a precious solidarity which frontiers do not stop.
You also experience the numerous difficulties of boatmen: your family life is marked by ceaseless displacements, separations, difficulties in the education of your children. The modernization of the boats and their maintenance shortens the shifts. However, the number of jobs is diminishing, and you are not assured of regular work. Progress obtained does not always benefit people at the same pace.

**No Economic Progress without Social Progress**

That is why I want to recall the Church’s conviction that there is no economic progress without social progress. Your activities are often designated as “services,” and they are indeed services for those who receive material or merchandise from them. However, do we give enough thought to the people who effectively render these services, the boatmen and the dock workers?

The Church’s social teaching speaks of the “civilization of work.” This implies a solidarity on the part of all those who participate in economic circles in view of the common good. It is also helpful to remember that the phrase “the common good” does not denote an abstract or personal entity. It involves the true good of all the people, sought in solidarity for the entire community. The common good surely implies sacrifice and a great sense of collaboration; however, it also requires that it is always lived with concern for justice and the equal dignity of all.

**Development of the Person Is the Aim of the Economy**

The Bishop of Rome would like to tell you once again of the Church’s esteem for all types of work in your profession and her profound desire to see the human dimension always respected. You know that social doctrine demands that the chief aim of the economy should be the integral development of the person in conditions which allow this professional life to be compatible with the personal flowering of each person, and his family life as well. This supposes that people do not allow themselves to be hemmed in by a pragmatic materialism. It presumes that economic agents, at all levels of responsibility, pursue the ideal of a solidary society where the values of service to one’s neighbor, and openness of the person to the transcendent in his personal relations with God the Creator and Savior, are placed in the forefront.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

61.

PROFESSIONAL LIFE MUST BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE PERSONAL GROWTH OF EACH PERSON


The sea, to which the history of your people is closely connected, is, as you know, God’s creation, a manifestation of the greatness of him who guides all our destinies in the course of time. However, the very image of the sea, not always calm and peaceful, and sometimes terrifying, also serves to remind us of the trials to which God sometimes subjects us in order to test the strength of our faith and the firmness of our hope. Nonetheless, we know that there is no storm in life from which God cannot save us, to lead us to the harbor of security and peace.

Christ Is Your Courage in Difficult Times

With its many aspects the sea therefore reminds us that our life needs a guide and support to accompany us along the billows of our existence. The moving Gospel passage which presents Jesus in the boat with his disciples in the midst of the sea immediately comes to mind: “Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but [Jesus] was asleep. They came and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ He said to them, ‘Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?’ Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”

This scene needs no commentary: Jesus is the true Lord of history; he has dominion over events which at every moment depend on his omnipotent will. He can direct and sustain the ship of our existence even in the most difficult and darkest times.

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139 This material was delivered as an address on June 25, 1989 in Gaeta, Italy, to sailors, fishermen and port workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, July 24, 1989, p. 5.

140 Mt 8:24-26.
Collaboration in the Redemption

The words which I wrote in the encyclical letter *Laborem exercens* are quite fitting for you, people of the sea, to your concerns and hard work: “Sweat and toil, which work necessarily involves in the present condition of the human race, present the Christian and everyone who is called to follow Christ with the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do. This work of salvation came about through suffering and death on a Cross. But 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 every day in the activity that he is called upon to perform.”

Civilization of Work

This Christian view of work, far from weakening our awareness of the person’s intrinsic dignity and the legitimacy of his just claims, rather contributes towards strengthening it in its deepest and truest core.

Besides the workers’ duties to society, the Church constantly recalls those of society to the working person. Despite the acclaimed recognition of the rights of every worker, it is not rare today to find cases of patent violations of basic aspects of entire categories in the world of work.

This is why the Church never tires of emphasizing the need for a “civilization of work” and that which is its foundation and soul, social solidarity. There cannot be a civilization of work if there is lacking the solidarity towards all those who take part in the economic process in view of the common good, of that good which is not reduced to an abstract or impersonal entity, but which involves the real interests of all persons, pursued in solidarity by the entire community. The Church proclaims that the main objective of the economy is the integral development of the person, in such conditions that the professional life may be compatible with the personal growth of each person and with his or her family life.

Sanctification of Work

Within this perspective it is your right to demand that your work should not prevent you from fulfilling your religious duties. It is necessary to do so in such a way that professional demands are compatible with the sanctification of work through

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141 *Laborem exercens*, n. 27.
participation at Mass on Sundays and holy days, a regular sacramental life, and an active insertion in your ecclesial communities. . . .

With the help and intercession of St. Erasmus, patron of sailors, uphold the treasure of faith which has been jealously passed on to you by your parents, by ancestors whose memory is held in blessing. Be “of one heart and mind,”\textsuperscript{142} even when you are far from home, on the immensity of the sea, in order to share your worries and tribulations, joys and hopes, between yourselves and your loved ones.

\section{62. Technology Developed without God Is Destined To Turn against Human Persons\textsuperscript{143}}


Today, we know, the economy of this territory is not lacking in difficulties, to the point where the small family farms are seeking to take on new activities, artisan and other. Agriculture and craftsmanship are experiencing a complex evolution, not only and not so much in terms of the structures and the methods of production, but in the relationship of dependence between demand and supply, which imposes limits to the quantity and ever more demanding conditions to the quality and novelty of the products. No sector of production can any longer consider itself self-sufficient.

\textbf{Growing Interdependence}

In the agro-industrial and agro-alimentary chain, agriculture is the link of the economic system of the country and, with craftsmanship, is the mirror of an

\textsuperscript{142} Acts 4:32.

\textsuperscript{143} This material was delivered as an address on October 29, 1989 in Martina Franca, Italy, to farmers and artisans. The translation was taken from \textit{L’Osservatore Romano}, December 11, 1989, pp. 6-7.
interdependence which is ever more marked as things develop. Precisely for this reason your work, too, is exposed to the risk of a new slavery imposed by the employer of “indirect” labor. I spoke of this in *Laborem exercens*, warning against a policy of work which is not correct from the ethical point of view, precisely because it overlooks such a system of conditioning, conducted at times by the State itself. I am here to encourage and to seek efforts of economic policies directed to the safeguarding of the specific rights of workers, particularly of the South.

The urgent diversification of the economy of Ionia requires that the agriculture of the whole province be supported with cooperative processes coordinated and co-managed together with integrated agro-industrial centers; it requires also that craftsmanship be not conditioned to an elite and voluntaristic survival, but rather encouraged by the application of zoning laws. The world crisis of the steel industry requires that the common good be pursued through a new and just regulation of the relations between the various economies.

**Solidarity**

I spoke of solidarity. This is both a source and a fruit of peace with God and with the whole created order. It grounds and nourishes that peaceful and harmonious relationship of human beings with one another and with the cosmos, which has been the fertile tradition of rural civilization, as well as of the culture of the workshops which are genuine schools of life.

**Respect for the Environment**

Citizens of Martina, I cannot help sharing with you my concern for one of the most urgent challenges of our generation: how to reconcile the economy of development with human ecology, with the quality of life.

Scientific research, suggestions and initiatives of professional associations and, above all, the responsibility of those in charge of the economy should establish the “human” compatibility between the technologies of production, transformation and commerce, and respect for the balance of the natural environment. “When it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity.” This is a task which involves every citizen.

144 *Laborem exercens*, n. 17.

145 *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 34.
In this land of yours which is still relatively immune to the pollution of the larger urban and industrial areas, the Pope exhorts you to farsightedness with respect to goods like clean air and clear water, green forests, and cultivated soil. Only in this way will you deliver whole to the future generations the heritage of these natural riches of yours, together with the ancient spirit of active, cordial and demanding welcome of your fathers. Only in this way will you pass on the genuine meaning of creation and of brotherhood to your descendants and to those who tomorrow will inhabit this land which is dear to you.

Quality of life is not only the result of a healthy and clean environment, but it is also the fruit of the integral promotion of the economic, cultural, and moral values of a people.

The Need for Evangelization

Such values must always be reoffered, redeemed, and rendered harmonious through evangelic wisdom.

In particular, the quality of moral and religious life which has always been the soul and leaven of your civilization involves all of you in a work of generous revitalization. The original expressions of popular piety and of social commitment which characterize your history stimulate you now to a new sowing, wherever this is possible; in religious associations and in places of formation, in the apostolate of charity, in confraternities and in other organizations. Knowing that “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good,” 146 be joyful and industrious “workers in the vineyard,” in order that Martina Franca—which has given the world people of genius and culture, cardinals, bishops and priests, religious and lay persons, well-deserving of society and of the Church—may continue to bear abundant fruits of cooperation and of solidarity even in our own times.

146 1 Cor 12:7.
63. CHRISTIANS MUST INTEGRATE THE WORLDS OF WORK AND FAITH

To all of you I repeat the Church’s great esteem for the world of work. Work is a fundamental part of our life here on earth. It often involves heavy fatigue and even suffering, but it can also be the forge of strong character and vigorous personality, the means by which we build up the world according to the values in which we believe. For the Christian, work is our way of taking an active and responsible part in the marvelous work of the Creator which surrounds us everywhere and completely fills our being.

Esteem for the World of Work

But why should the Pope talk about work? Perhaps some people may think that he has no right to do so; they think that work has little or nothing to do with religion. I might answer by saying that my own personal experience of work was one of the most interesting and formative periods of my life. I have expressed the richness of that experience in some of my writings. Today I have come to you, the workers of Malta, as a friend who shares the concerns and hopes of the men and women who—in the words of the book of Genesis—earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. I have also come as the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, and therefore as a messenger of One who was known as a carpenter and the son of a carpenter.

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147 This material was delivered as an address on May 26, 1990 in Malta, to workers gathered at St. Margaret Square. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, June 4, 1990, pp. 5,6.

148 Gen 3:19.

149 Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3.
Yes, the world of work is not alien to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord understood perfectly the reality of human labor. His words were filled with references to workers and their various occupations: the farmer who plants the seed and the laborer who harvests the crop, the vinedresser and the shepherd, the one who mends the nets beside the sea, the builder and the domestic servant, the merchant and the housewife, the soldier and the State official. They all had a place in Jesus’ interest and teaching. And the Apostles he chose to carry on his redemptive mission were workers and fishermen.

In every age the Church continues to present Jesus’ teaching about work, and especially today when economic relations and production processes are complex and increasingly impersonal, and threaten to turn against man himself. The Church preaches a social doctrine because the great questions affecting society, not least the question of labor, have a powerful impact on people’s lives and cannot be separated from the moral and ethical responsibilities of everyone involved.

Unfortunately, it is the experience worldwide that the history of labor relations, especially during the last two centuries, has often developed as a social struggle between workers and employers. Only with great difficulty has the ideal of social justice made headway. Today, with the opening of so many previously closed frontiers and the determination of peoples to live in freedom from ideological oppression, it is becoming clearer that although the quest for justice can be opposed and delayed, it cannot be suppressed. It is a fundamental aspiration of the human spirit. Systems built on untruths about the spiritual nature of man and of human relations cannot last. The dignity of the human person is the only solid basis of a social system capable of giving the right direction to human relations, and of fostering mutual understanding, dialogue, and cooperation. In an increasingly interdependent world, there can be no other way forward. In Malta, too, this is imperative.

Even though there are many kinds of work, in a sense all work shares the same nature. Its purpose is to transform and organize reality in a way that is useful and productive. Work is the implementation of God’s original command, recorded in the
first pages of the Bible: “Fill the earth and subdue it.” Whether through physical, intellectual or spiritual effort, “each and every individual takes part in the giant process whereby man ‘subdues the earth’ through his work.”

**Gospel of Work**

This is the beginning of what I call the “Gospel of Work” which the church wishes to transmit to the modern world. Whoever hears this “Gospel” and lives by it can no longer look upon labor as mere commodity to be bartered in exchange for pay. In a wider and more noble view, work must also be seen as the path to self-development and as the normal means for people to create the conditions that permit a healthy cultural, social and religious life. Because the nature and organization of labor affects people so totally, Catholic social doctrine insists that the human person is the center and norm of all economic processes. That is why the Second Vatican Council made this earnest appeal: “The entire process of productive work must be adapted to the needs of the person and to the requirements of his life, above all of his family life.” A change of priorities is needed in the world economic order if the reality of work is truly to serve people and not oppress them in new forms of slavery. This is especially evident in the condition of workers in the developing countries of the South, but also in the industrialized countries of the North. Maltese society too is called to strive for those changes which are necessary for promoting a development which embraces all sectors.

**Unemployment**

The “Gospel of Work” holds that all honest labor, competently carried out, has an innate dignity and confers dignity on those engaged in it. That is why unemployment is such a deadly thing. It leaves its victims without adequate economic support, but more than that it deprives them psychologically and socially. For that reason, I urge you: do not abandon the unemployed, especially young people seeking a livelihood. The unemployed and their families have a right to the effective solidarity of the State, of business interests and of workers’ organizations themselves.

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150 Gen 1:28.
151 *Laborem exercens*, n. 4.
152 *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67.
153 *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67.
154 *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 21.
CHAPTER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

Rights of Workers

Workers are the subjects of rights and duties. People who work, especially dependent workers, have a right to be treated for what they are: free and responsible men and women, called to have a share in the decisions that concern their lives. A society that seeks the true well-being of its members will make appropriate provision for family support. It will make it possible for mothers to give their primary attention to their children and homes, and, where necessary, it will provide for the special needs of working mothers. And particular classes of workers need the special attention and protection of society. Agricultural workers, for example, often feel that their contribution to society is not fully appreciated. The “Gospel of Work” then, preaches that economic, social and political systems must be sensitive to the complete well-being of individuals and to the needs of their families.

Duties to the Common Good

But workers and their organizations also have solemn duties towards the common good. The first of these duties is to work well, to contribute effectively to building a better society. This too is part of the “Gospel of Work,” proclaimed two thousand years ago in the life and activity of Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of God. The value which Jesus placed on work during the long years of his hidden life was not lost on the early Christians. Saint Paul boasted of the fact that he worked day and night in order not to be a burden to others, 155 and he summed up the spirituality of work in these words: “Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.” 156

Human Work Is Cooperation with the Creative Intention of God

These words are an invitation to integrity and competence on the part of everyone, workers and employers, people engaged at every level of economic and productive activity. At the same time, the Apostle is calling us to widen the horizon of human activity to include God’s plan for the world and for our eternal salvation. The world of work must not be seen as a part of reality somehow opposed to faith and religion, as if in conflict with God and his Church. Work can be a source of satisfaction and development, as well as of cultural and spiritual growth, only if society sees it as cooperation in the creative intention of God and respects each person’s

155  2 Thes 3:8.
unique dignity and higher aspirations, including the rights of conscience, as inalienable gifts of the Creator.\textsuperscript{157}

**Solidarity and Responsibility**

The outstanding virtue of the working men and women of Malta should be solidarity: a commitment to the common good, a rejection of selfishness and irresponsibility. We must become responsible for one another. What are needed are concrete acts of solidarity: between employers and employees, between working men and women themselves, with special sensitivity for the poor and the defenseless. In all of this, workers’ unions have a specific part to play. It is their task to defend the rights of their members through the legitimate means at their disposal, keeping also in mind the rights of other categories of workers, the general economic situation of the country and, in short, the common good. In the present state of technological progress and social development they are being challenged to adopt a broader view of their social function and responsibilities. Their great task is to harmonize the quest for material progress with the cultural and spiritual advancement of society. In other words, a great wave of social solidarity, not conflict, is the proper response to the increasingly interrelated and interdependent nature of today’s problems.

**Vertical and Horizontal Dimension of Work**

But solidarity, dialogue and cooperation must be built on a firm foundation. These values demand a “readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one’s own advantage.”\textsuperscript{158} Thus the essence of the “Gospel of Work” is also the heart of the Christian message itself. Jesus Christ sums up his teaching in these familiar words: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”\textsuperscript{159} The first direction of work, then, is vertical, towards God: your work itself is an unfolding of the Creator’s intention and a contribution to the realization in history of the divine plan.\textsuperscript{160} The second direction of work is horizontal: it is an effective way of putting into practice love of neighbor.

\textsuperscript{157} Gaudium et spes, n. 35.

\textsuperscript{158} Sollicitudo rei socialis, n. 38.

\textsuperscript{159} Mt 22:37.

\textsuperscript{160} Gaudium et spes, n. 34.
Your work, insofar as it brings benefits of all kinds to society, is a magnificent form of service to others.

Integrate the Worlds of Work and Faith

The task then which the Pope leaves to the workers of Malta is to integrate the world of work into the world of faith. There can be no separation between the traditions of the Catholic faith, manifested at Sunday Mass, and the sense of commitment, honesty, justice, and brotherhood shown in the workplace during the week.

Dear friends, it is in this spirit of the “Gospel of work,” which was proclaimed by Jesus Christ two thousand years ago and continues to be proclaimed by the Church in our day, that I invite you to:

Say No to injustice at every level of society!

Say No to the individual and class selfishness that seeks its own interests without concern for the common good of the whole of society!

Say No to the materialism that deadens conscience and the spiritual dimension of life!

Say Yes to a new solidarity between all the members of the work force, and between workers and employers, between the world of work and the whole of Malta’s people!

Say Yes to the full material and spiritual development of every inhabitant of these islands, with special provision for the poorest and neediest!

Say Yes to God’s plan for creation and to his Truth written in the nature of all things and in the depths of the human heart!

The carpenter of Nazareth and the workers of Malta ought to be of one mind and one heart. Remember the words of the Scripture reading we heard at the beginning of our meeting: “Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.” In union with Jesus Christ, your work and your efforts to transform the world take on the quality of a sacrifice pleasing to God. By offering “what earth

161 Col 3:17.
has given and human hands have made” you prepare the way for God’s kingdom. That is the deepest meaning of your labor.

Dear brothers and sisters, may Christ’s kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love, and peace, take possession of your hearts, for the true progress and prosperity of Malta. God bless you all.

64.

CHRISTIAN WORKERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROCLAIM THE CHURCH’S SOCIAL DOCTRINE


Truly, in your quality as committed Catholic workers, you bear living witness to [the Church’s social teaching], fully conscious of your responsibility to your companions at work and to the Church herself. Indeed, you represent a group of organizations which want to identify themselves as Christian. In that, you are the heirs of the teaching of Rerum novarum and of its illustrious author who, as you know well, affirmed the importance and necessity of associations of Christian workers and who defended their right to existence and freedom.

During this brief meeting, on the vigil of the feast of St. Joseph, model of craftsmen and workers, I want to recall two things which seem important to me for the fulfillment of your vocation as Christian workers grouped in an organization such as yours.

Dignity of the Worker

In the first place, be more conscious of your dignity. To be a worker is in itself a source of pride because by your work, whatever it may be, you make the life of men

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162 This material was delivered as an address on March 18, 1991 in Rome, to delegates representing the International Confederation of Christian Workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, March 25, 1991, p. 8.
and women in society easier and happier by devoting your energy and skills to them. What is more, by being a Christian worker you set out to initiate Jesus Christ who himself freely chose to be a worker. Thus you make your life and condition an offering pleasing to the Lord. The call to holiness is not something added on or marginal to your status as Christian workers, but it reveals its entire meaning. Do not be afraid to profess your faith openly, individually or as members of a confederation which bears the very name that identifies you.

**Bearers of the Church’s Social Doctrine**

In the second place, as you have recalled, I have chosen to proclaim this centenary year of Leo XIII’s encyclical the Year of the Church’s Social Teaching. Now, that directly touches your vocation as Christian union members. As such, you are the witnesses and, one could say, the bearers of that doctrine which is still all too often ignored or misunderstood.

During these difficult times which are confused in many ways, your mission is to proclaim, and especially to incarnate, the social doctrine in the very exercise of your life as workers, members, and leaders of your organizations. Indeed, it is a question of knowing this doctrine well, of making it known to others, especially to young people. But most of all it is necessary to put it into practice in dialogue with your colleagues at work, with business leaders and with leaders of other union organizations which are not specifically Christian. The Church’s social doctrine in fact is meant to be lived and applied in the concrete life of men and women in all the dimensions of life in society and with all the responsibilities that involves, from one’s own family to the life of the nation and the international community.

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163 Mk 6:3.
65.

TRUE HUMAN PROGRESS RESPECTS
THE SPECIAL ROLE OF WOMEN AND MOTHERS\textsuperscript{164}

Work and Women.

Certainly the entrance of women into the work-place helped change the traditional lifestyle of your city; in part it took from the female role of wife and mother the traditional tasks of raising the children and keeping house, once almost exclusively her role. The rhythms of work regulated by the needs of the company, prolonged absence from the home, greater economic and psychological autonomy did not fail to have a profound effect on the mental attitudes and behavior that prevailed only a few decades ago. All this did not have totally positive repercussions: all too often the woman has ended up paying a heavy price for modern progress. It is necessary that, in the changing social context, women commit themselves to rediscover and reaffirm the deepest reasons for their femininity.

**Personal Dimensions of Motherhood and Virginity**

Woman’s personality, as I wrote in *Mulieris dignitatem*, bears two dimensions, motherhood and virginity, which are the two paths of her personal vocation and justify and complement one another. Only by deepening our knowledge of the truth about the human person “who can fully discover his or her true self only in a sincere giving of self,” will a person open up “the path to a full understanding of women’s motherhood.”\textsuperscript{165} In this motherhood, joined to the man’s fatherhood, we have a reflection of the eternal mystery of generation which is in God himself. Although both of them, father and mother, are the parents of their child, “the woman’s motherhood constitutes a special part of this shared parenthood, and the most demanding part.”\textsuperscript{166} It is the woman, in fact, who “pays directly for this shared generation which literally absorbs the energies of her body and soul,”\textsuperscript{167} and a man owes a special debt to his wife.

\textsuperscript{164} This material was delivered as an address on March 19, 1991, in Matelica, Italy, to women factory workers. The translation was taken from *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1991, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{165} *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18.

\textsuperscript{166} *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18.

\textsuperscript{167} *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18.
In the light of these considerations it seems obvious that no program of the equal rights of a woman and men is valid if it does not bear in mind what has been mentioned above. In fact, it would end up being detrimental and unjust to those, the women, whom it claims to want to promote and protect.

Times are changing, and so are the ways of organizing society. The pace of productivity is accelerating, but the dignity and order of love must remain immutable. The woman represents “a particular value by the very fact that she is a human person and, at the same time, this particular person, by the fact of her femininity;” her dignity “is measured by the order of love which is essentially the order of justice and charity.”

**Risks from Rapid Change**

When the changes in the work-place are so rapid that they do not allow for a proper preparation for change on the part of the subjects who work there, it can happen that the productive needs take precedence over consideration for the person. At that point moral principles and the indispensible ethical references to the care of the person are put in crisis, and respect for his or her intangible dignity is diminished. This is probably not the case in your firm, where you seek to adapt the work schedule to your commitments as women and mothers of families, but we all know that today there are occupational contexts where the dignity of the woman is threatened. It is necessary for her to regain her special role, avoiding the risk of being considered almost as an object of productivity.

**True Role of Women**

Work, that personal participation in the transformation of creation and source of a dignified living, must not take away from the woman, spouse, and mother the possibility of fulfilling the social and family functions which are proper to her, because only in this manner can she fulfill her human vocation in its feminine aspect as well. A job that would restrict the woman’s environment and end up taking her away from her role of love, preventing her real fulfillment, would deprive the human and Christian community of an indispensible protagonist in its evolution and the growth of civilization.

How necessary, then, is the new evangelization and an expert, effective apostolate to the world of work in order to respond concretely to the demands placed

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168 _Mulieris dignitatem_, n. 29.
upon the modern organization of work! Only thus will it be possible to reclaim and promote a true space for the role of woman, spouse, mother, and teacher. Only under these conditions will the family not suffer from the absence of the feminine function and the children will not be deprived of a mother’s affection and support, which are indispensable for the harmonious growth and balanced development of the domestic cell.

Progress, as it has developed, favors some people, while it marginalizes others. There is the danger of seeing a gradual and imperceptible loss of attention to the person and all that concerns him or her. Still very timely is the observation I made at the conclusion of Mulieris dignitatem: “In this sense, our time in particular awaits the manifestation of that genius which belongs to women, and which can assure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human! and because the greatest of these is love!”

66. THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION IS A CALL TO ACTIVITY IN MANY AREAS OF SOCIAL LIFE


The decision to call your associations “Christian” was a clear affirmation that the life of those who believe in Christ does not only regard the personal choices of the members, but it involves the way of thinking and of acting of the whole movement.

169 Mulieris dignitatem, n. 30.

170 This material was delivered as an address on December 7, 1991 in Rome, to the Christian Associations of Italian Workers. The translation was taken from L’Osservatore Romano, January 15, 1992, p. 4.
For each of you, being Christian means accepting in faith and joy Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, risen and living, who frees us from sin, who communicates his own divine life and calls us to collaborate in his mission of salvation.

**Christian Mission of Collaboration**

Certainly, a movement is Christian because its social and economic union and political choices are inspired by the Gospel and by the social doctrine of the Church; but it is Christian also because, as a movement, it intends to shape the mentality and educate the spiritual life of its members so that they may find in Christ the sure guide in facing the problems of modern life with the particular competence of the various temporal sectors. Christian formation, therefore, must constitute the main objective of the whole movement, and it must find its logical connection with the ecclesiastical structures of social apostolate and with work.

In the effort to be an authentic Christian movement you have before you numerous and serious problems which require great competence, solid faith and generous love for every person but especially for those in need.

**Value of Life**

Fortunately, today people have a heightened awareness of the value of the life and health of every person, with an ever more effective system for the prevention of accidents at work and of assistance during illness. On the other hand, however, the protection and the promotion of life from conception to natural death have been given a grave blow from a mentality and civil legislation which permits abortion; likewise the fight against drugs, AIDS and the pollution of the environment appear to be indecisive and inconstant.

The working world has particular reasons and motives to support vigorously this action on behalf of life, aiming principally to eliminate the moral, cultural and social causes of these sad phenomena. The problems of life regard every upright human conscience; every Christian, and therefore every Christian worker, should feel personally challenged and involved in solving these problems.

**Technology for the Common Good**

The Christian appreciates technological innovations, but he knows that he must strive to avoid making them “idols;” he must see to it that they are used for the common good, under the control of all components of society.
The changes that they bring about in employment, in the method of working, in the times of work and in human mentality, create a series of problems which you must face daily together with other social forces, in open dialogue with the persons responsible for introducing these changes, without ever forgetting the ultimate aim, which is the integral development of every person.

The problems of the economy and of the market are connected with technological problems. A precise knowledge of the workings of the market will help you to join in the work of the social forces and of the State, so that the market may effectively serve the common good. This good certainly requires the existence of free enterprise, but it requires that it be realized for man and in a human manner. From this derives the duty to promote free enterprise and an economic policy which finds work for the unemployed, especially young people.

What you do for the education of youth, for the realization of justice and of a progress that is not only economic but also social and moral, represents an important contribution. A serious study of the problems of work and all its aspects will help you to understand the relationship between work and migration, between work and unions, between social and political activity.

Business: A Community of Work

I know that you pay particular attention to the business as a community of work. Every business must become a true community, even while maintaining the distinction of roles. Everyone, in fact, has precise rights and duties, which must be coordinated so that they may prepare the way for ever greater forms of participation. In fact this is the only way in which a shared responsibility in labor and economic problems can be established.

The presence of immigrants will give you the chance to realize this orientation and to put into practice a positive and cordial welcome with a type of dialogue that is also open to the proclamation of Christ. Thus the “authentic culture of work,” so important for the development of human civilization, is progressively formed.

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171 *Centesimus annus*, n. 35 and *passim*.

172 *Centesimus annus*, n. 43.

173 *Centesimus annus*, nn. 35-37.

174 *Centesimus annus*, n. 15.
CHAP TER III: ADDRESSES TO WORKERS

Marriage and the Family

The crisis of modern society will be overcome if marriage and the family recover their true physiognomy and precise function; and this can take place fully when the family is founded on a single indissoluble marriage, which Jesus Christ raised to the dignity of a sacrament; when the social, economic, and working order does not hinder it, but promotes it in conjugal communion, in the procreation and education of children; when the woman’s role of wife and mother receives concrete economic support as well as being appreciated from the cultural point of view; when the family itself is respected in its rights and in its educative duties against unjust penalization of its free educational and scholastic choices; when within it, spiritual life is cultivated and the growth of the married couple proceeds together with that of the children. In this way the working world becomes a place where the family can find its nature and function.

Fight against Selfishness

One must have the capacity and courage to change what needs to be changed. But even more courage is needed to fight every form of personal and social selfishness. Be prepared therefore, for every sacrifice to strengthen moral values in yourselves and in social life. They are the foundation of every civilized way of life and of all social activity. 175 Open your life to Christ, foundation and strength of the freedom which welcomes truth. 176 A truly civilized state cannot ignore the need for moral values. Your formation and your presence in society must express a strong testimony which helps everyone to return decisively on the path of moral seriousness.

United Activity Especially for the Poor

For its part, a Christian movement which acts in the social sector is sure to find in the defense and promotion of ethical values which reflect the full truth of man as manifested in Jesus Christ a powerful impulse towards that united activity of Catholics, which has so contributed towards the good of Italy. 177

While seriously working for the common good, remember above all the poorer people, who have a right to your solidarity, on the basis of the principle of the

175 Centesimus annus, n. 46.

176 Centesimus annus, n. 46.

177 Address to the Ecclesial Congress of Loreto, April 11 1985, n. 8.
universal purpose of the earth’s resources: with the measure of this solidarity the Lord judges you, your actions and the community to which you belong.

**Spirituality of Work**

Dear workers of the ACLI, I cannot end these reflections, which I entrust to your responsible commitment as Christians working at this great moment in history, without recalling the spirituality which must be profoundly present in your daily work. To this spirituality I dedicated the last part of the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, knowing well that the Church “sees it as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet, and King, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches.”

In fact, as the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* affirms, “by work a person ordinarily provides for himself and his family, associates with others as his brothers, and renders them service; he can exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing divine creation to perfection. Moreover, we believe by faith that through the homage of work offered to God man is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, whose labor with his hands at Nazareth greatly ennobled the dignity of work.”

May he, Jesus Christ, be the light and the strength of your commitment to inspire your work and the entire working world with the Gospel!

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178 *Laborem exercens*, n. 24.

179 *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67.