

BLESS THE WORK of OUR HANDS, O LORD

Labor, doing honest work with our own hands,
so that we may have something to share with one in need.

Ephesians 4:28

PRESENCE of GOD

Let us pause and remember that we live and breathe and work in the holy presence of our loving God. Holy is God, holy and mighty, holy and living forever!

WHY CELEBRATE LABOR DAY?

Work is an exercise in love. Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, once wrote, "The sole purpose of life is to serve humanity."

It is what I have cared for that I grow to care about. People who tell you they love you but never do a thing for you, people who say they value the family but never join the family on any event, people who say they care about the planet but never do a thing to make the planet a more human place to live, all fail to see that life is a venture in human development and that work is the key.

Work makes time worthwhile. Time is all we have to make our lives bright-colored, warm, and rich. Time spent on an artificial high is time doomed to failure. Time spent amassing what I cannot possibly use is time wasted. Time spent in gray, dry aimlessness is a prison of the thickest walls.

But good work that leaves the world softer and fuller and better than ever before is the stuff of which human satisfaction and spiritual values are made.

The implications of a spirituality of work in a world such as ours are clear.

1. Work is my gift to the world. It is my social fruitfulness. It ties me to my neighbor and binds me to the future. Work is the way I am saved from total self-centeredness. It gives me a reason to exist that is larger than myself, it makes me part of possibility. It gives me hope. The poet wrote: "If I knew that the world would end tomorrow, I would plant an apple tree today."
2. Work gives me a place in salvation. It helps redeem the world from sin. It enables creation to go on creating. It brings us all one-step closer to what the kingdom is meant to be.
3. Work is meant to build community. When we work for others, we give ourselves; and we can give alms as well. We never work, in other words, for our own good alone.
4. Work leads to self-fulfillment. It uses the gifts and talents we know we have, and it calls on gifts of which we are unaware.
5. Work is its own asceticism. When we face the work at hand, with all its difficulties and all its rigors and all its repetition and all its irritations and then accept it. What today's work brings is what is really due from us to God.
6. Finally, work is the way we really live in solidarity with the poor of the world. Work is our commitment not to live off others, not to sponge, not to shirk, not to cheat. Giving less than a day's work for a day's pay, shunting work off onto

underlings, doing one coat of paint where we promised to do two, are not what was meant by "tilling the garden and keeping it."

Work is our gift to the future. It is our sign that God goes on working in the world through us. It is the very stuff of divine ambition. And it will never be over. The philosopher wrote, "Do you want a test to know if your work in life is over? If you are still alive, it isn't." God needs us to complete God's work. Now.

- from "Work: A Pathway To Something Deeper" by Joan Chittister,
Liguorian, September 1993.

PRAYER

Holy are You and holy is Your work among us in Jesus Christ,
Who came to be born in the home of Joseph, a carpenter,
a trade He learned and practiced,
a laborer in our midst.

He called out fishermen and activists.

He healed the servant of a soldier.

He received the support of resourceful women.

He delegated His ministry to His disciples,
empowered all His followers

to do His divine work in this world.

By His suffering, death, and resurrection,

You gave birth to Your church,

delivered us from the bondage of sin
and the power of death

and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

And so as a baptized and commissioned people,
remembering Your mighty work in Jesus Christ,

we offer ourselves, our daily lives, the work of our hands
and our unique locations

for ministry in the world-

homes and hospitals, parks and stores,

prisons and concert halls-

as a living and holy sacrifice

in union with Christ's offering for us

as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.



Ecclesiasticus 38:27-32a

So it is with every artisan and master artisan

who labors by night as well as by day;

those who cut the signets of seals,

each is diligent in making a great variety;

they set their heart on painting a lifelike image,

and they are careful to finish their work.

So it is with the smith, sitting by the anvil,
intent on his iron-work;
the breath of the fire melts his flesh,
and he struggles with the heat of the furnace;
the sound of the hammer deafens his ears,
and his eyes are on the pattern of the object.
He sets his heart on finishing his handiwork,
and he is careful to complete its decoration.
So it is with the potter sitting at his work
and turning the wheel with his feet;
he is always deeply concerned over his products,
and he produces them in quantity.
He molds the clay with his arm
and makes it pliable with his feet;
he sets his heart to finish the glazing,
and he takes care in firing the kiln.
All these rely on their hands,
and all are skillful in their own work.
Without them no city can be inhabited,
and wherever they live, they will not go hungry.
The Word of the Lord!

LITANY OF LABOR

- (Leader) Let us pray to the Lord of all creation, from whom comes life and work and purpose.
Almighty God, when You formed us lovingly out of the dust of the earth, You breathed into us the breath of life and gave us work and purpose for living.
- (ALL) You placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to till and keep it.
Through our work, You made us co-creators with You, shaping the world in which we live.
- (LEADER) You gave dignity to our labor by sending Your Son to labor with us.
(ALL) By our labor, you enrich the world.
- (LEADER) By our labor, we enjoy the fruits of creation.
(ALL) By our labor, we find direction and purpose.
By our labor, our families are made secure.
- (LEADER) For providing varieties of work and for blessing us by our labor:
(ALL) We give You thanks, O Lord.
- (LEADER) For those who plow the field and those who make the plow; for farmers and farm workers, for steelworkers and machinists; for those who work with their hands and those who move the earth:
(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those who tend the sick and those who seek new cures; for doctors and nurses, for scientists and technicians; for those who keep notes and those who transcribe:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those who think and those who create; for inventors and explorers, for artists and musicians; for those who write books and those who entertain:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those who work in offices and those who work in warehouses; for secretaries and receptionists, for stockers and bookkeepers; for those who market products and for those who move them:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those who inspire our minds and those who motivate us; for teachers and preachers, for public servants and religious servants; those who help the poor and those who work with children:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those whose labor is tidiness and cleanliness; for janitors and sanitary workers, for drycleaners and maids; for those who produce cleaning products and those who use them:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) For those who sail the waves and those who fly the skies; for captains and attendants, for astronauts and deep sea divers; for those who chart and those who navigate:

(ALL) We give you thanks, O Lord.

(LEADER) You bless us all with skills and gifts for labor.

(ALL) You provide us opportunities to use them, for the benefit of others as well as ourselves.

(LEADER) Guard and protect those who labor in the world.

(ALL) Bless the work of our hands, O Lord.

(LEADER) Look kindly upon the unemployed and the disabled.

(ALL) Give health to the sick, hope to the bereaved.

(LEADER) Keep us from laboring only for greed.

(ALL) Make us loving and responsible in all that we do.

Creator Lord, You are the source of all wisdom and purpose,
You are the blessing of those who labor.

Be with us in our labor to guide and govern our world.

Give all men and women work that enhances human dignity
and bonds us to one another.

Give us pride in our work, a fair return for our labor,
and joy in knowing that our work finds its source in You
through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All who love and serve Your city,
all who bear its daily stress,
all who cry for peace and justice,
all who curse and all who bless,

In your day of loss and sorrow,
in your day of helpless strife,
honor, peace, and love retreating,
seek the Lord, Who is your Life.

In your day of wrath and plenty,
wasted work and wasted play,
call to mind the word of Jesus,
"I must work while it is day."

For all days are days of judgment,
and the Lord is waiting still,
drawing near a world that spurns Him,
offering peace from Calvary's hill.

Risen Lord! shall yet the city
be the city of despair?
Come today, our Judge, our Glory;
be its name, "The Lord is there."



Saint Joseph, Patron of All Workers,
help all those who are unemployed to find work.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle
And all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
inspire all to have a great respect for their work.

Live Jesus in our hearts.
Forever!



