

St. Joseph the Worker

In this moment in human history where it appears that the simple and humble reality of being a working man and a father is under attack. In fact, masculinity, fatherhood, and manhood itself is in crisis. How direly we ever need St. Joseph the Worker today!

You could say what St. Hildegard of Bingen said at the turn of the second Christian millennium rings true for us today: "We have entered an effeminate age where men are not men."

Laziness, dissipation, irresponsibility, carelessness, foolhardiness, even effeminate, indecisive, oversensitivity reigns among persons who ought to be men, but appear to be stuck in little boy mode, or worse, little girl mode.

God's answer is St. Joseph the Worker. After the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the greatest model of manhood, fatherhood, masculinity, of a faithful husband, a provident father who provided the child Jesus with the first and most important gift a man must give to his children: himself, his own time and attentive, personal interest, and great loving devotion.

In the entrance antiphon for today's liturgy we hear:

Blessed are all who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!
By the labor of your hands you shall eat;
blessed are you, and blessed will you be, alleluia.

By the labor of your hands! Many men's hands have been weakened by a lack of fear of the Lord and walking in his ways. Such hands grow lazy and insecure, as such hands find it easier to stretch out and touch what is evil: porn, booze, drugs, cheating, or perhaps they do not stretch out at all but are simply lukewarm and soft.

We need to realize that the work of our hands is redemptive. Sometimes as a priest I find it necessary to engage in manual labor, to refresh my mind and realign my body. Service - doing something kind and unwarranted for the people for whom you are responsible, your wife and kids, your co-workers - this "strengthens the hands." The deepest service is that kind that comes from obedience to one's state in life. For anyone can pick a service they enjoy doing with ease, but dutifully performing something that may seem mundane and even a drudgery, for the sake of providing for one's

family can be transformed into a labor of love and one of the greatest means of sanctification.

Work is holy. St. Joseph the Worker shows us this.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2427 tells us:

"Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ."

In the collect for Mass today we read:

O God, Creator of all things,
who laid down for the human race the law of work,
graciously grant
that by the example of Saint Joseph and under his patronage
we may complete the works you set us to do
and attain the rewards you promise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Here are some practical ways we can live out the graces of this prayer and this great feast day:

1. **Be a man.** Decide to work hard and faithfully. Decide to take up the work of being present as a responsible initiator, provider, protector, and father of those entrusted to your care. This is first done by simply being present to them.
2. **Be strong.** What is a Christian's strength? Weakness! As St. Paul said, "It is in my weakness that I am strong." A real man is not afraid to be vulnerable, especially to be vulnerable to God in prayer and allowing God to strengthen our weakest parts. This is so important to curb that stupid insecurity and foolish vanity that comes simply from a lack of giving our

weakness over to God. This kind of strength doesn't allow a man to be caught up in boyish machismo that inhibits him from true valor and virtue.

3. **Be real.** Make a clear and realistic plan of how to faithfully carry out the duties and chores that will make you a man: working to be holy, to lead others in holiness, to care for your family or those entrusted to you. Set realistic goals in keeping with a practical plan of life. Accomplish them. Set new ones. Make sure the top priority is God, wife, children, then work, then yourself. Turn to the Sacraments, prayer, scripture, penance, and service to sanctify you that you can "make it real."

4. **Be true.** A real man is good. He is morally straight, with his eyes fixed on what is good. Decide to rid yourself of any mortal sin and even venial faults. Be good in the goodness of God.

5. **Be.** Set time aside to just "be." Lead your family in Sunday worship, Sunday rest, and healthy recreation. Don't allow work to become a god. Turn off your phone. Turn away from the whirring siren song of the world with those you love and show them how to celebrate and rejoice in God, teaching them how to BE renewed as a family.

May the prayers of good St. Joseph the Worker, and Our Lady, his virginal spouse, help men to be men and renew the face of the earth with holy and just living.

- Fr. David M. Chiantella