

## WORK AS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

[Chapter IV of John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, *Guardian of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Custos)*, 1989]

22. *Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth.* The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). This "*submission*" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of his presumed father, he was known as "the carpenter's son." If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families, in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. In our own day, the Church has emphasized this by instituting the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1. *Human work*, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work too has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation, and has also been redeemed in a special way. At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption.

23. In the human growth of Jesus "in wisdom, age and grace," the *virtue of industriousness* played a notable role, since "work is a human good" which "transforms nature" and makes man "in a sense, more human." [*On Human Work*, 9]

The importance of work in human life demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to "help all people to come closer to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world, and to deepen ... friendship with Christ in their lives, by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King." [*Ibid.*, 24]

24. What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies;...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things -- it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic." [Paul VI, *Discourse* (March, 19, 1969)]