

How I discovered the Presence of God on My Job

By Sally Haddad, SFO

Whenever we take the time to review our past, we can usually discover God's saving power in our lives. Then, we experience the presence of God, and, therefore, we glorify Him. When I reviewed my work history, it became clear to me how God has been forming me in my attitude towards work in general and towards my job in particular.

At the present time, I work as a senior pipe designer at the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics in Groton, Connecticut. I've been employed there for almost 25 years, and its product is the nuclear submarine used by the U.S. Navy.

When I first started to work at Electric Boat, I disliked my job very much. First of all, I had hoped to get a job as a computer programmer after I graduated from college in 1973. Unfortunately, there were no openings in any of the companies where I applied for work. After several months, I settled for a position at Electric Boat as a math Tech aid in piping design. Secondly, I had participated in protest marches against the war in Vietnam. Therefore, it was embarrassing for me to be working for a company with a product related to war. Thirdly, when, I surrendered my life to Jesus, I developed the attitude that working in an office and receiving a weekly pay check from a secular business was incompatible with following Christ.

God used several events in my work history to reform my thinking towards my job. First of all, whenever, Electric Boat launched a submarine during the 70's and 80's, there would always be a group of protesters (usually the same people). There was never any violence. In fact, the Electric Boat employees and the protesters rarely spoke with one another. What the protesters did accomplish was a 5 or 10 minute work break, because we would enjoy looking out at them through the windows especially when they were wearing weird costumes. I have to admit, however, that God may have used them to propel me into meditating on the Church's teachings about war and peace. I had to find God's presence or leave. When I joined the Secular Franciscan Order, I asked my Postulant Instructor if I would be even allowed to belong to the Secular Franciscan Order with the type of job that I had, and he told me that my job was not an obstacle to membership. The fruits of my meditation were that I began to realize it was the soldier, who picked up his gun and went off to war, that put an end to the tyranny of Japan & Germany during World War II. It was not the pacifist who stayed home to protest World War II. that put an end to war. Also, St. Joan of Arc was chosen by God to set France free from the tyranny of England, but the French had to fight in a war in order to receive that freedom. In other words, God's Kingdom is not fully established, and it will not be fully established until the end of Time. Right now, we live in a world where we need policemen and soldiers to maintain peace and law and order. I began to realize that some people are called by God to maintain peace, and I am one of them. I accomplish that by working at Electric Boat.

Secondly, in 1983, I participated in a very long strike at Electric Boat. While I was out on strike, I lived in and worked at a Catholic Group Home for the Handicapped in Connecticut. I was all excited when I first moved in, because I was thinking to myself, "This is **IT!** Now, I am **really** following Jesus Christ! No more worldly, secular offices for me!" However, this job turned out to be one of the most difficult experiences of my life. I left there in 1985 with a great need for inner healing. However, God is faithful to His promises, and He brought much good

out of my negative experiences. After I left, I began to realize that working in an office did not make me an inferior Christian. In fact, if the office is where God wants someone to be, then it will be the office that will produce the greatest fruit of the Holy Spirit. I also realized that I was happier and doing more good when I was working at Electric Boat than when I was working at the Catholic Group Home. I had money to support ministries that were effective in spreading the Gospel, and I was closer to my family. When I finally returned to Electric Boat in 1986, I was grateful to be there.

Finally, in 1989, there was still one roadblock that God had to remove before I could fully discover the Presence of God on my job. In 1986, I started taking classes at the University of Hartford with the intention of getting a degree in computer science. I still had not lost my desire to be a computer programmer. In 1990, I took an educational leave of absence from Electric Boat in order to work as a student Co-op at a software developing company in Manchester, Connecticut called CADKEY. (The inspiration to do all this came to me on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi in 1989.) I loved the job **immensely**, and I never wanted to leave. However, CADKEY was not able to offer me a permanent full-time position at the end of my leave, so I had to return to Electric Boat. After I returned to Electric Boat, I began to realize that God sent me to CADKEY in order to learn why He denied my wish to be a computer programmer. When I was working at CADKEY, it was extremely difficult to get a day off from work and I was expected to work late and on weekends whenever I was asked on a moment's notice. It was very difficult to make plans with other people. Yes, I loved the work and I did not mind making all those sacrifices for one year. I was able to see that I would have been very unhappy if that had been a permanent job. Also, the job that I had at CADKEY would have put a serious crimp on the apostolic work that I do. On the other hand, with Electric Boat, I can take a vacation at my convenience, I am not under any obligation to work overtime if I choose not to work overtime, and I can get a day off when I need it. In other words, I can make plans without being concerned that I would have to cancel them at the last minute because of my job. I am available for any meetings that I would have to attend for the Secular Franciscans on evenings and on weekends or for any other ministries that God might want me to be doing. Finally, Electric Boat is better for my marriage than CADKEY would have been. (I was single when I was working at CADKEY.)

Praise God! I am finally content with my job here at Electric Boat, and I will stay here as long it is the will of God.

I am a member of St. Pius X Fraternity in Middletown, Connecticut in the Father Solanus Casey Region. I was professed in 1985. At the present time, I am serving as a member of the NAFRA Work Commission.