

RETURNING TO THE SOURCES

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*Let them esteem work as a gift
and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community (art.16)*

As a newcomer to reflections about "work" I thought it would be wise to learn more about the sources behind the brief article in the Rule concerning work as means to deepen my own formation. I'd like to share with you what I found because I believe it has value for your own formation. Using the **From Gospel to Life** copy of the Rule with commentary I noticed the footnote following article 16, the article in our Rule concerning work. The footnote references three citations. These citations are similar to those in most of the other footnotes, referring most often to the early Franciscan sources or to the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The first part of article 16, "*Let them esteem work as a gift...*" has its source in the first rules of the Friars Minor. St. Francis devoted a full chapter to work in both the Rules of 1221 and 1223. Chapter 5 in the **Rule of 1223** is entitled "*The Manner of Working*":

The friars to whom God has given *the grace of working* should work in a spirit of faith and devotion and avoid idleness, which is the enemy of the soul, without however extinguishing the spirit of prayer and devotion, to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. As wages for their labor they may accept anything necessary for their temporal needs, for themselves or their brethren, except money in any form. And they should accept it humbly as is expected of those who serve God and strive after the highest poverty.

Reference to work as "*...a sharing in the creation redemption, and service of the human community*" may be found in the Second Vatican Council's **Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World**:

*Human work, whether exercised independently or in subordination to another, proceeds from the human person, who as it were impresses his seal on the things of nature and reduces them to his will. By his work a man 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. This is the source of every man's duty to work as well as his right to work; moreover, it is the duty of society to see to it that, according to the prevailing circumstances, all citizens have the opportunity of finding employment. Finally, remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified, livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level to correspond to the role and the productivity of each, the relevant economic factors in his employment, and the common good. (67:2)*

Dialogue Starters

1. I have to admit that I don't think of my work as having such great impact so as to influence the creation and redemption of the human community. Do you? Reflect on your experience of the creative, redemptive and service aspects of your work (paid or not).

2. In your own words, how would you describe St. Francis approach to work. Does it correspond to your own?