

## 2021 St. Joseph the Worker

**1. When Brother Joseph and I were visiting a home in Clearwater recently,** I was admiring the new vegetable garden and praising how two children of the family had a wonderful chance to share in the work. The father said wryly of his daughter, “She really doesn’t know what’s going on in her own back yard. She’s on the computer all day.” She was working hard but disconnected from the land. What a different experience work is today! It’s so affected by the moral, social, environmental and cultural crisis we are all facing together! **Our work experience has altered our relationship between human beings and nature.** Christian conversion in the field of work becomes evident in how we handle created things. Or as our Holy Father phrased it: Ecological conversion requires people to let “the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (*Laudato Si’* 217). Our Lord puts it simply: **Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth!** (Mt 5:5)

**2. When we compare our experience of work today with the simple lines of the first reading,** we seem to be transported into another realm. Work in Genesis is a multidimensional reality. To Adam and Eve are given the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field, the trees and the seeds. Their workshop are the earth, the air and the water around them. Their intimate contact with these created realities has a permanent impact on them. **Work is experienced as an integrated whole.** Work can also exhaust them so that frequently they need to step away and rest. Our cities today may not allow them this rest. One regular visitor to our Abbey, said, “If I could come to the Abbey every week I would; it

is so beautiful here, I don’t get refreshed in the city!” **Rest takes in the whole view.**

3. In fact when we reflect quietly upon the Gospel that Jesus preached, **we can be struck by the many work related images and parables he used.** He spoke of planting and harvesting, of building and pruning, of hiring and paying wages. From all these work experiences Jesus drew out profound lessons which offer us that inside view of what was hidden in creation and in the heart of the son of Joseph the Worker. These images offer us a glimpse into God’s interior life! **Jesus contemplated his work and drew from it the lessons his Eternal Father taught him through the ordinary activities of work.** In his final work, his work on the Cross, Jesus gave us the greatest gift, himself, the fruit of his work! Through this work **he entered into that definitive rest,** that is, his glory where in his human nature he became one with his Father.

**3. When God rests, he enters into himself!** He enters into the glory and wonder of the trinitarian life that produced all these beautiful things we enjoy. To enter into rest then, the Christian worker is to enter into Their rest. Sometimes we have another kind of “rest” which can prompt us to think about the rupture between the workman, nature and God: unemployment. **Without work, we become restless, and agitated.** We can begin to ask ourselves deeper questions: What is the purpose of my work? Why is it linked so closely to my happiness? Would anyone be able to work without the gifts of creation: the birds, the fish, and the beasts, the trees, the earth, air and water? **Work can call us to an ecological conversion, to an awareness that all creation is a gift, from the microscopic COVID virus to the mighty planets. Work and ecology are permanently linked.**

**3. It is a contemplative, faith-attitude that connects the dots between work, the gift of creation and conversion.** This faith response is an encounter with the beauty, intelligence, and love of God that upholds the universe. **All things were created through him and for him and without him was nothing made that was made.** (cf. Jn 1:3) So, St. Paul naturally exhorts us, “Whatever you do, put your whole heart into it, working for the Lord, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (cf. Col 3:23, 17) Thanksgiving is always a sort of rest, **a contemplative movement of the soul as it considers what it has received and returns praise and honor to its Creator.**

**5. But to really arrive at this contemplative movement in our souls, we must make sure what we understand by an ecological conversion.** It is “a vision that is anchored in the etymology of the word “eco-logy”, which derives from the Greek words “οικος” and “λογος”, **holistic study and reflection on our home**, on our common home. Putting this new paradigm of integral ecology into practice is a complex operation based on the interaction of the various dimensions of ecology: environmental design ... with economic ecology ... with socio-cultural ecology ... with human ecology (the centrality of human dignity)” (LS 141).<sup>1</sup> ) **Like the Genesis experience, ecological conversion is an integrated experience. A work that keeps the whole in view.**

**6. If we consider the experience of our work as a part of the formation we give the seminarians and our junior monks, then we**

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<sup>1</sup> Interdicasterial Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Ecology, *Journeying Towards Care for our Common Home – Five Years after Laudato*

**must first look to Jesus.** Jesus was introduced into this world of work and contemplation by St. Joseph. It was an experience unique to him, no doubt, but with a specific reference to us. If Jesus wondered about the mystery of the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field, it was because he wondered about himself, the very Word from whom it all proceeded. **But he also wondered about how all could share his Father’s gifts equally.** He kept the earth and the poor together in the preaching of the Gospel. He knew they were all made for him and he came so that all might be united to him and share in his union with his Father. Yet his Father’s blessings were divided between the poor and the rich. **In his work of the Eucharist he would equalize that disharmony and it would become a model for equality of sharing in creation and in his Church.**

**7. In fact, the Eucharist has this multidimensional experience of ecological conversion.** Each alike receives Jesus, our God, and we are made brothers and sisters beyond our differences of race and class and sex. This is the ethical dimension of the Eucharist. **Seen from another angle, in the Eucharist each of us receives the same wage for our labours**, eternal life - the economic dimension. We can also speak of an ecological dimension and a spiritual dimension! The purpose and design of ecology points to God. The Eucharist is taken from the fruit of the earth and blessed for the worship of God. Finally, **each time we receive the Eucharist, each of us is brought into communion with God.**

**8. In this Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, then, is hidden the riches of ecological conversion** that invites people to let “the effects of

*Si’*, Introduction, 9. <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/good-practise/holy-see-vatican-city>. June 7, 2021.

their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (LS 217). The Eucharist reminds us of how closely this work of Jesus also reflects the core of the Gospel, for in the end, **Christian conversion is about love, clothing everything with the work of Love, God’s love.**