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The Work of Caring for the World

On the feast of St. Joseph the Worker and International Workers' Day in Europe, "Aleteia" has published an article by Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz about the true meaning of work as service to others.

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[Link to article in *Aleteia*](#)

This year International Workers' Day, or Labour Day, invites us to think about several different topics that

the coronavirus crisis has brought to the fore: how there are so many good people in the world; how progress needs to respect nature even while making use of it; how dependent we are on one another; how vulnerable we all are, and how society needs to show solidarity if it is to be truly human.

In the response to the pandemic, the caring professions are constantly being spotlighted. Care-related words like accompany, mourn, protect, listen, and many more are in the headlines all the time. This helps us to reflect on the how and why of any job. We have come to understand better that service is the soul of society, and is what gives work its meaning.

Work is more than a need or a product. The book in Sacred Scripture that tells about the origins of mankind says that God created

man “to work” and to care for the world (*Genesis* 2:15). Work is not a punishment but the natural situation of the human being in the universe. When we work we establish a relationship with God and other people, and can develop better as persons.

The amazing response of so many professionals, whether believers or not, to the current pandemic, has highlighted this dimension of service. It helps us see that the end recipient of any job or profession is someone with a name and surname, someone who possesses inalienable dignity. All honest work ultimately boils down to the task of “caring for people.”

When we try to work well with a concern for our neighbour, our work – any work – takes on a completely new meaning and can become a path to an encounter with God. It does a lot of good to integrate this

perspective of the person into our work, even the most routine kind, because it is a perspective of service that goes beyond what we are in duty bound to do.

As in the early times of Christianity, today too we can see with special clarity the potential of lay men and women who strive to be witnesses to the Gospel, working shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues, sharing a passion for their job, and showing humanity amidst all the suffering currently caused by the pandemic and uncertainty about the future.

Every Christian is “Church,” and in spite of our personal limitations, in union with Christ we can take God’s love “to the bloodstream of society.” This was an image used by Saint Josemaria Escriva, who preached the message of seeking holiness through ordinary work. With our work and

our service we too can show the reality of God's care for every person.

Labour Day this year also brings with it new concerns about the future, because of job insecurity in the short or medium term. We Catholics turn especially to the intercession of Saint Joseph the Worker, asking that no one will lose hope and that we will all adjust to the new situation. We beseech Saint Joseph to enlighten decision-makers, and to help us understand that work is for the good of the person, not the person for work.

In the months and years ahead, we should often call to mind Pope Francis' words and remember how "we have realised that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together."

May this First of May bring with it the hope that the freedom we recover when the lockdown ends may truly be freedom in the service of others. Then our work will become what it was in God's plan right from the beginning: care for the world, starting with the people who inhabit it.

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz

Prelate of Opus Dei

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