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“Work takes us closer to God”

You work. God also works.
Together, we make this world better by working.

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Animals can do little more than roam around, play, dig a hole or build a nest, find food, flee from predators and reproduce. They sleep content with the world as they found it when they were born.

Not so man. God created us to work. God told us in the beginning: “Be

fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth.”

Conquering and mastering requires lots of work.

Some people think work was a punishment for sin. If so, why does Genesis say that, even in the garden, where everything was already “very good”, Adam and Eve were supposed to work? “God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it.”

This happened before sin. After sin, the punishment was not work but the exhaustion we suffer. “Because you ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat: Accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering shall you get your food from it every day of your life.”

Work is not a punishment. It is a blessing. Those who do their work

well become like God. They are living as Christ lived.

I like to ask people, “How did Jesus spend most of his life?” Many say, “He was preaching.” I say, “No. Guess again.” They say, “He performed miracles.” I say, “No. I’ll give you one more chance.” They say, “He cast out demons.”

Before doing any of these, Jesus spent 30 years in a little village making chairs and tables. The same person who made all the stars in the sky didn’t mind doing ordinary work. Why? I don’t know the whole answer. At the very least he was teaching us how to live.

You may never preach a sermon, walk on water or cast out any demons. But you can work the same way Jesus worked. And here’s the secret. This will make you holy.

I like the way one priest said it, “Try to become like Christ by imitating his thirty years in the workshop of Nazareth. Ordinary work is not only the context in which you should become holy. It is the 'raw material' of your holiness. It is there in the ordinary events of your day's work that you discover the hand of God.”

God is waiting for you in church. He is also beside you in the world—in your office, in your home, in the fields, on the lake. God comes looking for us wherever we work.

This article by Fr. Joe Babendreier first appeared in the Sunday Nation on 25th July 2010