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Sanctifying Ordinary Work: a Textile Maker

Vincenzo is a textile maker in Italy who has worked in this field for more than 30 years. He talks about how he tries to sanctify his daily work.

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Vincenzo runs a business that makes and installs textile products for a variety of clients: individuals, hotels, bars, restaurants, etc. Among the jobs that Vincenzo and his sons take

on are, for example, making quilts and installing rugs: “When you work in this business you have to be continually adapting,” Vincenzo says. “We don’t limit ourselves to a single type of job, but try to be available for everything related to the textile industry.”

Vincenzo usually works in his shop together with his wife, one of his sons, and two employees who devote themselves entirely to sewing. Two other sons go to meet with clients and oversee the installation work.

A trying moment

In the 90s, Vincenzo was head of production for a business.

Professionally, things were going very well. But the situation changed suddenly: “When we were expecting our fourth child, we lost 200 million liras on a job that turned out badly. Someone I knew told me that it would be imprudent to have a child

in that economic situation. At that time I was going to Mass only from time to time, but I felt impelled to have recourse to God and especially to our Lady. I recall how when I was quite young and my father died, I also turned to God for help.”

Vincenzo and his family overcame that tough situation. “During those difficult days,” Vincenzo continued, “I entered on the path of conversion, stumbling often but never giving up. In 2007, I saw that our Lord was calling me to Opus Dei and I asked to be admitted as a Supernumerary.”

Learning to work for love

Vincenzo's conversion began in a moment of crisis. And he says that his vocation to the Work, which was like another step forward, transformed his professional life: “I started with some more basic things, like not cursing, a habit many tradesmen and workers have. I also

tried to deal with people in a more positive and pleasant way, and I noticed that our Lord was helping me. Now I find it easier and I enjoy welcoming the apprentices who begin working in our business. And I try to help them grow in their Christian outlook, although I'm never sure of the results of my efforts.”

On the wall of Vincenzo's shop is a poem by Charles Peguy: *A day came when workers were no longer servants. They worked for honor, an absolute honor. That the foot of a chair had to be well-made seemed natural to them. It was what the work demanded and not because of the wages.*

“I like this poem a lot. But I especially like to replace the word honor with love. This is the meaning of my vocation, to do things out of love,” Vincenzo says. “Without love, the work of my artistic business would

just be a burden. The end of each month brings bills, salaries, letters of exchange, clients who don't pay... But I see all this as an opportunity to love. Even when I sometimes lose my patience.”

Sharing the faith with other craftsmen

“For some time I was meeting with a colleague at 7:30 in the morning to go to a nearby worksite. We would meet in front of a church so I could go to Mass at 7:00. One day he decided to go too, without saying anything. On another occasion I suggested praying the Rosary on the way there. Over time he grew in his desire to go deeper into his Christian faith and he began on a path of spiritual formation. We continue discussing work-related questions, but every year in May we make a pilgrimage together.”

“Whenever I talk with my colleagues about growing in their faith,” Vincenzo says, “I always try to explain to them that it is not simply a question of saying a few more vocal prayers or going to Mass every day, but trying to live in such a way that Christ lives in you. I myself try to repeat frequently Saint Josemaria’s words: *I am nothing, I am worth nothing, I have nothing.*”

Daily prayer is a very important element in Vincenzo’s life: “Every stage in my interior life has its challenges. Some years ago it was less difficult for to get up and go to Mass in the morning. Now I find it harder. But I can’t picture myself skipping Mass or daily prayer. I feel the need to speak with God even when making business decisions. For me, our Lord is the most important ‘partner’ in my business.”

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