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The Work of Caring for the World

THISDAY online has published an article by Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz about the true meaning of work as service to others.

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The day of work, this year, invites us to consider diverse realities and aspects, of which the coronavirus crisis has made us more aware: that there are very many good people in the world; that progress has to be united to a control over nature which

is at the same time respect; that we all depend upon each other; that we are vulnerable and that a society, in order to be human, needs to practise solidarity.

In the response to the pandemic, all the professions related to the care of persons, stand out. Words relating to “care” occupy the headlines: accompany, weep, protect, listen to, and soon. This situation makes us think about the “why?” and the “up to what point?” of any task. In some way or other we understand better that service is the soul of society, that which gives meaning to work.

Work is more than just a need or a product. The Book of Sacred Scripture which relates the origins of humanity points out that God created man “in order to work” and take care of the world (Genesis 2, 15). Work is not a punishment, but the natural situation of the human being in the

universe. By working we establish a relationship with God and with the others, and each one can develop better as a person.

The exemplary reaction of very many professional women and men, believers or non-believers, in the face of the pandemic, has made manifest this dimension of service and helps us to realise that the final recipient of any job or profession is someone with a name and surname, someone with an undeniable dignity. All noble work ends up, when all is said and done, as the task of “taking care of people.”

When we try to work well, while being open to our neighbour, our work, whichever work it is, acquires a completely new meaning and can become a way to meet God. It does great good to integrate into work – even the most routine work – the perspective of the person, which is

that of service, that goes much further than what is strictly due for the payment received.

As was the case in the first times of Christianity, we also notice now very strongly the potential of each lay person who tries to be a witness of the Gospel, shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues, sharing professional passion, commitment and humanity in the midst of the present suffering provoked by the pandemic and the uncertain future.

Every Christian is “Church” and, in spite of their own limitations, united to Jesus Christ, they can take the love of God “to the circulatory system of society”, in an image used by St. Josemaría Escrivá, who preached the message of holiness through professional work. We, too, with our work and our service, can make present God’s care for each person.

The celebration of 1st May is today also a concern for the future, about job insecurity in the short or medium term. We Catholics have recourse with special strength to the intercession of St. Joseph the Worker, so that no-one loses hope, so that we may know how to adjust to the new reality, so that he enlightens those who have to take decisions and so that he helps us to understand that work is for the person and not the other way round.

In the next months or years, it will be important to” keep in our memory” what we have lived, as Pope Francis asks us, and to remember that “we realized that we were in the same boat, all fragile and disorientated; but at the same time, important and necessary, all called to row together”.

Let us hope that this 1st May will lead us to desire that the freedom recuperated at the end of the

confinement may be truly “in the service of the others!” Work will then become – as God’s original plan from the beginning – taking care of the world and, in the first place, of the persons who live in it.

By Fernando Ocáriz

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