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“Work is man's original vocation”

Work is man's original vocation. It is a blessing from God, and those who consider it a punishment are sadly mistaken. The Lord, who is the best of fathers, placed the first man in Paradise ut operaretur, so that he would work. (Furrow, 482)

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From the beginning of creation man has had to work. This is not something that I have invented. It is

enough to turn to the opening pages of the Bible. There you can read that, before sin entered the world, and in its wake death, punishment and misery [1], God made Adam from the clay of the earth, and created for him and his descendants this beautiful world we live in, *ut operaretur et custodiret illum* [2], so that we might cultivate it and look after it.

We must be convinced therefore that work is a magnificent reality, and that it has been imposed on us as an inexorable law which, one way or another, binds everyone, even though some may try to seek exemption from it. Make no mistake about it. Man's duty to work is not a consequence of original sin, nor is it just a discovery of modern times. It is an indispensable means which God has entrusted to us here on this earth. It is meant to fill out our days and make us sharers in God's creative power. It enables us to earn

our living and, at the same time, to reap ‘the fruits of eternal life’ [3], for ‘man is born to work as the birds are born to fly’ [4].

To this you might reply that many centuries have gone by and very few people think along these lines; that most people, when they work, do so for very different reasons: some for money, some to support their families, others to get on in society, to develop their capabilities, or perhaps to give free play to their disordered desires, or to contribute to social progress. In other words, most people regard their work as something that has to be done and cannot be avoided.

This is a stunted, selfish and earthbound outlook, which neither you nor I can accept. For we have to remember and remind people around us that we are children of God, who have received the same

invitation from our Father as the two brothers in the parable: ‘Son, go and work in my vineyard’ [5]. I give you my word that if we make a daily effort to see our personal duties in this light, that is, as a divine summons, we will learn to carry them through to completion with the greatest human and supernatural perfection of which we are capable. (Friends of God, 57)

[1] cf Rom 5:12

[2] Gen 2:15

[3] John 4:36

[4] Job 5:7

[5] Matt 21:28

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