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The work of caring for the world

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz reflects on the significance of Labor Day this year: "service is the soul of society, that which gives meaning to work."

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Labor Day this year, invites us to consider various realities that the coronavirus crisis has brought to the fore. Among them: that there are so many good people in the world; that progress must go hand in hand with a dominion of nature, while at the

same time respecting it; that we depend on each other; that we are vulnerable; and that for a society to be human, it needs to be in solidarity.

In the response to the pandemic, the professions more directly related to the care of persons stand out. Words related to "caring" make headlines: accompanying, crying, protecting, listening ... This situation makes us reflect on the "what for" and the "how far" of any job. In some ways, we now understand better that service is the soul of society, that which gives meaning to work.

Work is more than a need or a product. The book of Holy Scripture that recounts the origins of humanity indicates that God created man "to work" and to care for the world (cf. Genesis 2:15). Work is not a punishment, but the natural state of the human being in the universe. By working, we establish a relationship

with God and with others, and each one can develop better as a person.

The exemplary reaction to the pandemic of so many professionals, both believers and unbelievers, has manifested this dimension of service and helps us to consider that the ultimate recipient of any task or profession is someone with a first and last name, someone with an inalienable dignity. All noble work is ultimately directed to the task of "caring for people."

When we try to work well and be open to our neighbor, our work - any work - acquires a completely new meaning and can become a way of meeting God. It does a lot of good to integrate into work, even to the most routine task, the perspective of the person, the perspective of service, which goes beyond what is due by remuneration.

As in the early days of Christianity, we are seeing clearly today the potential of every lay person who tries to be a witness to the Gospel. Working side by side with their colleagues, they share the same professional passion, commitment and humanity in the midst of the sufferings caused by the present pandemic and the uncertain future.

Every Christian is “Church” and, despite his personal limitations, in union with Jesus Christ he can bring the love of God “into the circulatory stream of society”. This is an image used by Saint Josemaría Escrivá, who preached the message of holiness through professional work. With our work and our service we can make present the care that God has for each person.

The celebration of May 1 today is marked with concern for the future, for job insecurity in the short or

medium term. Let us Catholics go more intensely to the intercession of Saint Joseph the Worker, so that no one may lose hope; that we may learn how to adjust to the new realities; that he may enlighten those who have to make decisions; and that he may help us to understand that work is for the human person and not the other way around.

In the coming months or years, it will be important, as Pope Francis asked, to "try to remember" what we had lived through and recall that "we realized that we were in the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented; but, at the same time, important and necessary, all called to row together."

May this 1st of May lead us to desire that the freedom regained at the end of the confinement be truly a freedom "at the service of others". Work will then be carried out as God had designed it from the beginning:

taking care of the world; first of all,
the people living in it.

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