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# **Beyond the grind - finding meaning and grace in work**

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Modern society places an enormous value on work, but can we say that the average person's relationship with work is healthy? Through professional work, humanity's standard of living has increased significantly, but this has a cost – long hours, uncertain results, conflict, and a lack of work-life balance. These challenges question the true meaning of work.

## **Oriented to God**

Professional duties are often rewarding, but at other times can be a grind, especially when one is under constant pressure from deadlines and unreasonable expectations.

The Christian message tells us that beyond being merely efficient, the love of God plays a crucial part in transforming ordinary labour into something holy.

Work has a divine meaning – God entrusted the Earth to man so that through his work he could discover its life and beauty, participating in the work of Creation (Genesis 2:15).

The Son of God Himself embraced the profession of carpentry for which He was well known among His fellow countrymen (Matthew 13:55).

In His parables, Jesus also showed awareness and appreciation for the many professions common during his time – shepherd, farmer, baker. His followers, too, kept their professions: Peter the fisherman, Paul a tentmaker, Dorcas a seamstress.

The Spanish Catholic priest Saint Josemaría Escrivá, in one of his homilies, reminded all Catholics that they should not limit themselves to material production. “Work is born of love,” he wrote, “it is a manifestation of love and is directed

toward love” (*Christ is passing by*, 48).

St John Paul II elaborates this point. Beyond the objective dimension of work – its external result – there is a subjective dimension which perfects its author (*Laborem exercens*, 6).

Good work leads us not only to produce great things, but to become better persons, and this perfection happens when we work out of love.

## **The supernatural dimension**

The sanctification of work happens when we allow the love of Christ to shape our activities – He works with us and, somehow, through us.

Human efforts matter in the sanctification of work. Our professional problems are unlikely to be solved through miraculous interventions. God’s grace does not replace our human action, but

instead elevates it. This elevation is an effect of the divine love working in us: God's grace and human correspondence meet in this process.

To work in Christ means to find love in our professional tasks because we realise that we bring goodness to our world and serve fellow human beings through our work.

Love perfects the things we do. A gardener's love for nature shows in the way he cares for his plants – the garden flourishes as a result. A teacher's affection for her students gives her patience when the class gets rowdy. The sense of responsibility in a business owner helps him face crises with a spirit of sacrifice that will lead him to protect his employees. Imagine how Christ's love, the greatest of all loves, can lead one to a greater passion and generosity in service.

**Being Christ in our workplace**

To sanctify our work, it will help us to imagine how Christ would react if he were in our place. For example, we can ask ourselves: “How would Jesus behave if He had to come to my office, handle this difficult client, and face the professional setback that I’m going through?” Reflecting on this can lead us to approach our work with patience and generosity, and thus sanctify it.

We may feel that being Christ in our workplaces is often beyond our human capabilities, yet we know we can rely on God’s help and His grace to see us through each day.

All we need do is to turn to Him at the beginning of our activities, perhaps with a short and spontaneous prayer done in silence, with which we offer Him what we are about to do, and persevere with His grace, in putting love in the work of our human hands.

## **SANCTIFY YOUR WORK IN THESE WAYS :**

- ☑ Ask the Lord for His grace before you begin work.
  
- ☑ Live in His grace, try to do your job the best you can, with human perfection.
  
- ☑ Put in supernatural intention. Remember that any honest job can make lives better. Offer your job as a spiritual sacrifice for His glory and the sanctification of souls.
  
- ☑ Small and discrete reminders may help - a small crucifix or another item that turns that turns your heart to God, kept in your pocket or on your desk where you can see it throughout the day.
  
- ☑ Give Him thanks at the end of the day.

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