

## FAITH AT WORK

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BEAUTIFUL are the things that are seen, more beautiful are the things that are understood, but by far the most beautiful things are those which are ignored." The use of faith in our work is one of the most beautiful things in the world, and it is seldom utilized today. Consider the wonderful cathedral of Milan. Its unique form and order please the human eye, and men call it beautiful. To an architect the cathedral is more beautiful because he understands the principles of its construction. Yet few admirers of the Milan Cathedral ever realize the most beautiful thing about the cathedral, namely, the fact that it was built by faith. The men who labored so long and well to build the cathedral were men of strong lively Catholic faith. Their work was a labor of love for the God of their belief. These men put their faith to work and thus produced wonderful results. "In the Middle Ages Gothic architects fashioned poems in stone for the delight of heaven. Metal workers wove iron gratings as fine as black lace. Deft fingers wrought laces, copes and chasubles; weavers their gorgeous tapestries; and glaziers dyed windows in rainbow tints, all for the glory of God." These men of old knew that faith could aid their work and that their work helped their piety. Catholics of today can do likewise, if they use the power of their God-given gift of faith. Saint Paul gives us a working definition of faith in his epistle to the Hebrews: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not. . . . By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God; that from invisible things visible things might be made. . . . Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:1, 3, 6).

What things did the cathedral builders hope for? The artistic cathedral spires point heavenwards like a million fingers to the answer: God, in whom is the evidence or cause "of things that appear not." Because of this, Communists have ridiculed Catholic workers saying; "You work for pie that is in the sky, while we work for pie on earth." In return, we respond that it is far better to store our riches in heaven than on earth. Christ Himself tells us to lay up treasures in heaven, "where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." Hence, it is better to work with God through our faith. Of course, it is no easy task

to practice faith in this modern Godless era. Like the pagans of old we are too busy with earthly pursuits and pleasures to think of God as we should. We usually remember Him at our brief morning and evening prayers and at Sunday Mass. But what about the rest of the time; how often do we think of God while we are at work or play? Is it any wonder then that we fail to receive many of the things we hope for in our life.

Difficult it is to think of God in a world full of distractions that make up everyone's workaday life. From morning till night our attention is taken up with visible things around us. Long dreary hours plus insufficient wages keep our minds busy about other things than God. And if we are out of work, we become hopeless; we think everything is lost, except the daily mounting grocery, clothes and rent bills. How can we look up at God, when we are constantly being forced to look to earth for our daily bread?

If we are running a lathe in a machine shop, or doing any other work that demands precision, all our attention must be concentrated upon the job at hand. Nor can a laborer in a steel mill stop to meditate on the benevolence of God, while he is sweating from every pore at the job of unloading a long row of red-hot furnaces. Some automatic tasks do leave a worker with ample time for reflection on spiritual matters. But this time is usually spent in useless conversations, daydreaming, or in planning how we are going to enjoy evenings and weekends. At times it is spent in thinking and talking about God and the whence, why, and where of human life. However, the results are not always inspiring. Factory and office workers are not supposed to be theologians anyway.

Putting our faith to work, then, seems to be a problem. But like most problems the solution is easy if we know how to go about it. Granted that our world is full of distractions, yet, as we already know, God is everywhere. His divine power moves within and around us. So, regardless of what constitutes our workaday problems, God knows the solution and He will help us solve our difficulties if we have faith in Him. God helps those who try to help themselves, so we must do our part of the work. All our daily actions of thought, word and deed should be dedicated to the honor and glory of God. Faith elevates our simplest acts to the high plane of virtue and merit. A glass of water given in the name of Jesus brings a greater reward spiritually than a rich man's natural donation to the community chest. The power of faith is most essential, when we are out of a job and despair grips us. Then faith reminds our sinking hearts that God is our Father who knows all we need. He has given us everything,

and if, at times, He takes away something we desire, faith tells us it is for our own good. Too often the enjoyment of our material wealth tends to make us forget God. The only time we can truly say we have lost everything is when through sin we have lost God's love. Even then our case is not entirely hopeless. God always gives us the grace to return to Him. And as for jobs that demand our closest attention, faith recalls to our minds that God is deeply interested in all our actions both external and internal. A machinist at the Ford plant is honored and thrilled, when Mr. Henry Ford stands at his side, while he is turning out a perfect tool on a lathe. What joy should be in our souls, when we know by faith that God, the Master Craftsman of the entire universe, is watching our work!

The people who do their work with a strong faith in God are thrice blessed. They possess a confidence, peace and joy that conquers all the trials and hardships of the world. The power of faith in our work brings with it a reliance upon God for its result. If we have done our part of the job faithfully, God will take care of the rest. At times the result of faith confirms the old saying that "Truth is stranger than fiction." For example, I know a fine Catholic policeman and father of a large family who learned that his two weeks' wages were delayed due to a shortage of city tax income caused by the depression. Returning home that evening, his wife informed him that the family had nothing to eat for supper. Undaunted the father told the family to sit at table just as usual. He had barely finished saying grace before meals, when a knock was heard on the door. It was their next-door neighbor carrying a basket. He related that his family and friends had just returned from a very enjoyable picnic and fishing trip. His party had more fish and food than it could use, so would they accept the basket of food and fresh fish? Strange are the ways of God's Providence.

The peace that comes with faith in God is permanent. Unlike worldly peace it isn't a calm before the storms of war. Godlike peace is "The tranquility of well established order." Faith accomplishes this noble result by equalizing our viewpoint on human existence. By nature we tend to observe everything in the world from a materialistic aspect. Our natural sight often obscures the vision of the supernatural around and within us. Faith balances our vision and we realize that we were created in a supernatural state, that we were reborn spiritually by Baptism and the Passion of Christ, that natural joys can never perfectly satisfy us, that we need spiritual graces and life for our perfection, and that God is our true last end. Thus faith gives us a proper focus on Christian life. With this view ever before

us, ours is a peace that will never be destroyed by earthly tribulations. It is the same peace that Christ gave to His disciples, when they were sent out into the world to preach the Gospel. Christ foretold the trials that would afflict them, yet He also assured them that His peace would abide with them and they would emerge victorious over the evils that beset their paths to eternal glory. This same divine assurance is ours, if we utilize the power of our faith. Christ is the author of our faith. Hence all our work performed with faith will have some bearing on our supernatural end, God, because the object of science is truth, the object of morality is goodness, and the object of art is beauty. But all three objects in the fullness of their perfection are found in God who is TRUTH, GOODNESS AND BEAUTY.

Faith carries with it a unique joy to the busy worker in factory or home. What joy can compare with that of a person who has done a good day's work for God's honor and glory? Thanks to God's gift of faith: "One's life may be a glorious hymn, an ever chanted song, though little things and weary toil may fill it all the day long." Faith in God built the beautiful marble cathedrals of the world. In the eyes of mankind, our own faithful daily work may not produce works of art, but in God's sight, we are building sparkling cathedrals of merit in heaven.