

At the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis marked May 1, the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, by recounting the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth and was called “the carpenter’s son”. Let us consider some of Pope Francis’ words as we think upon our own work and those who are unable to find meaningful work:

*In the Gospel of St. Matthew, in one of the moments when Jesus returns to his town, to Nazareth, and speaks in the Synagogue, the amazement of his fellow townspeople at his wisdom is emphasized. They asked themselves the question: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (13:55). Jesus comes into our history, he comes among us by being born of Mary by the power of God, but with the presence of St Joseph, the legal father who cares for him and also teaches him his trade. Jesus is born and lives in a family, in the Holy Family, learning the carpenter’s craft from St Joseph in his workshop in Nazareth, sharing with him the commitment, effort, satisfaction and also the difficulties of every day.*



Childhood of Christ by Gerrit van Honthorst

*This reminds us of the dignity and importance of work. The Book of Genesis tells us that God created man and woman entrusting them with the task of filling the earth and subduing it, which does not mean exploiting it but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work (cf. Gen 1:28; 2:15). Work is part of God’s loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way share in the work of creation! Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. Work, to use a metaphor, “anoints” us with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God, who has worked and still works, who always acts (cf. Jn 5:17); it gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one’s family, to contribute to the growth of one’s own nation.*

Today, on this Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, let us pray to God, remembering the model of Joseph.

God, give us work so that we may share our talents with others and know the dignity and satisfaction that you give us through our efforts. Give us patience while you open doors and wisdom to see your will. Keep our families in your care, and provide for all our needs. Never let stress diminish our love for each other nor our work as part of your healing ministry. In your name we pray. Amen.