

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Working and Creating Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time Monday,
September 1, 2014 **Labor Day** 8:15 AM 1 Cor 2:1-5; Lk 4:16-30 (In the Scriptures we see that God is the Creator of everything and it's all good, and then he creates humanity in his image and likeness to continue his work.)

Today we celebrate Labor Day and it is a celebration that is consistent with the tradition that we have all the way back to the Book of Genesis. And what it says is not obvious to the human mind. For example, modern science does not think of the universe as created by a Creator, but it's something that just proceeds, while mysteriously, by the laws of nature, which cannot be explained. The fact that there is great harmony and beauty and so on does not amaze them apparently; it's simply what they believe proceeds by chance. I myself find this astonishing that in the beauty and the order of the universe, of our earth, of life, that **people cannot see the awesome and wonderful work of a great intelligence, but that's the way we are. That's the world we are living in.**

In the Scriptures we see that God is the Creator of everything and it's all good, and then he creates humanity in his image and likeness to continue his work. So working and creating is essential to what makes human beings human. It's not just that they are smart. It's not just that they are capable of thinking or reasoning, but that they are **capable of working and creating. This is the essential attribute of the human nature.** And it is a godlike quality, so very dignified, even though it has many humble realizations. But all work, no matter how humble, is **dignified if it contributes to the common good.**

Some translations of today's gospel say, "Is this not the son of Joseph the carpenter?" This translation doesn't have that in there. So it was believed that **Joseph and Jesus were carpenters**, meaning woodworkers; they made wood things: carts, wheels, yokes, and so on, maybe roofs for houses. They were workers. **Working is part of human life, or should be.**

In modern times we see that the idea of work itself has been attacked in terms of its dignity. That's part of the atheism, the moving away from the biblical narrative, the not believing in **God as intentional, intelligent, Creator and, therefore, human life as called to mirror intelligent, purposeful creation and work.** So some people despise work. In fact in some cases, work has become very mechanical and we might say subhuman and people resent it and don't want it. So for some people the great dream is to **win the lottery** so they don't have to work, or the great dream is to get enough money so they can **retire early** and don't have to work. **This doesn't say a lot for the dignity of work that people can't wait to get out of it.**

But there is another thing. In modern economy because of all kinds of inventions: machines and computers, work is almost something that is being eliminated as much as possible. It's seen as unnecessary expense: better to buy a machine. My father was a lithographer for many years. He retired at 65. That whole field has been replaced by computers, what he did: producing color plates for printing. It's all done by computer; no men involved any more. That's going on everywhere where people are being eliminated, **work is being eliminated, and replaced by computers and machines of various kinds.**

So what are we doing to give work to people? **Where are people going to find work in an economy that is trying to eliminate workers?** This is a problem. I have no solution. But our society needs to look for a solution because we all need to work. As it has been pointed out by Pope John Paul II in his wonderful encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, we all need to work. **Work is what helps us become godlike.** It is an important part of our heritage and promoting work is part of our responsibility. It's part of what we need to become fully what God wants us to be.