

I think of so many families, schools and associations of various types, where young and old have grown up and matured with a copy of the magazine on the table or on the shelf, which has helped them to have, on important current issues, a point of view focused on truth and the defense of freedom.

Noting the good that the magazine is doing, it is only just to highlight, first of all, the efforts of the Palabra publishing house, which since it bought the masthead from the now defunct SARPE publishing house at the end of the seventies, has overseen the publication of the magazine.

Secondly, we should highlight the professional work of the journalists and other persons who have dedicated their energies and efforts to producing a magazine that lives up to its original aim. Thirdly, for many reasons, the loyalty of the subscribers, who have made this initiative a reality.

We have a duty to give thanks to all of them, and first of all to God who in his Providence has enabled us to carry out this important service for so many decades. I ask you now that *Mundo Cristiano* may continue its voyage in this exciting sea of the media, with the desire to continue guiding and entertaining thousands of families. This is a noble task that is always necessary.

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Speeches

Talk on the Sanctification of Work, Roman College of Holy Mary, Rome (February 17, 2023)

I am reminded of how our Father spoke of work as “the hinge of our sanctification,” ^[1] around which everything revolves. And together with

work, the Eucharist – the centre and root of Christian life – and divine filiation are the elements that summarise our whole spirituality.

Work is a sanctifiable and sanctifying reality. Apart from the natural value it has and which embraces everyone – because, whether one wants to or not, the human person works: even those who attempt not to, those who want to ‘rest’ a lot, end up working – with God’s grace, it means much more, especially for us.

In *Christ Is Passing By*, our Father says, “Since Christ took it into his hands, work has become for us a redeemed and redemptive reality. Not only is it the background of man's life, it is a means and path of holiness. It is something to be sanctified and something which sanctifies.” ^[2] These are words that we know very well, since we will have meditated on them and will certainly have explained them to others in our apostolic work. And they are, like everything that forms part of our dialogue with God, the object of deepening our understanding of them and, above all, of living them better.

Sanctifying oneself and sanctifying one's work

Several aspects of these words of St. Josemaría can be highlighted. One obvious and principal one is that not only can one sanctify oneself while working, but that work is in itself sanctifiable. It seems an unimportant distinction, but that is not the case. It is not a question of adding something to the human reality of work, such as for example, while doing this task I am going to say many aspirations. It's a very good thing to say aspirations, but that's not what it's about. To sanctify work is to sanctify myself in the exercise of my profession, which means that the very action of working sanctifies me.

The result of work is not holy as such – the table, however well I have made it, is not in itself holy – but the action by which I make it can be. In a similar way, we can say that the result of work is also sanctified, in the sense that it gives it added value. But the fundamental point is that it is the human action of working that is sanctifiable, by the grace of God. And, as the action is sanctifiable, this makes the person who performs it sanctified. Hence the link between sanctifying work as an action and sanctifying oneself in work.

Sanctifying others

The third aspect is to sanctify others through work, insofar as – being a sanctified reality – it can influence, through the communion of saints, the whole world and can be offered for apostolic intentions and, therefore, be an instrument to sanctify other people.

Therefore, to sanctify work is to sanctify the action of working, which is an action of the person; and if the action is sanctified, the person is also sanctified. And with that, it becomes possible, through the communion of saints, to sanctify others. Simply by offering one's work, one already influences the sanctification of others.

And what is the root of these three aspects? Obviously, sanctifying the action of working. Because when I sanctify the action, I sanctify myself. This is the root of the other two aspects: to the extent that I sanctify the action of working, I sanctify myself at work and I can sanctify others.

Do things for a supernatural motive...

It can be seen then that the fundamental thing is to sanctify the very action of working. But how is an action sanctified? By love, when it is exercised in union with the Lord through charity. And this is achieved in work – although it is useful for every action – by doing what our Father told us in *The Way* : “Add a supernatural motive to your ordinary work and you will have sanctified it.” ^[3]

Understood superficially, it might seem extrinsic: I set an intention and that's it; as if they were two different things, the task and the intention. For example: “I will set as my intention the conversion of China and no matter how I work, I have already sanctified it.” That is not the point. Intention is not something added on top, it must be intrinsic. And what is the intention or supernatural motive that is sufficient for work to be sanctified? It is to do it for love of God and, inseparably, for love of others.

There is a phrase from scholasticism – probably by St. Thomas Aquinas, and although it is not literal, the concept is true – which says: *finis est causa causalitatis in omnibus causis*. ^[4] It is a phrase of great depth, although it may sound like a tongue twister. It states that “the finality is the

cause of the causality of the other causes". That is to say, from the final cause that I establish, depend the material cause and the formal cause.

When the supernatural motive is truly assumed as the final cause – that is, what I seek as the ultimate end in that work is to love God, and to love and serve others – I necessarily work well and I sanctify myself and sanctify that work. The result is the best possible, within my limitations. If one's aim is to love God and serve others, one necessarily tries to work to the best of one's ability. And, consequently, the result – the material and formal object – is also the best. Therefore, as our Father says, everything depends on the motive, which is to love God and serve others.

This is very important, because it answers a neuralgic question: "Why and for what purpose do I work?" Sanctifying work is central to the spirit of the Work, it is the crux of the matter. That is why I have to ask myself from time to time why I am working: whether it is to get it done as soon as possible so that I can go and rest, to make myself look good, to please myself... Because of our weakness, we can have any number of motives. But we must return to the fundamental one, which is to do things to unite ourselves to God, to serve God and to love others.

Right intention is very important, because it is the one that guides us in everything, the one that takes away or adds value to what we do. It is the motivation for work to be sanctified, even when it goes materially wrong. One can have a deep, supernatural motive of loving God and serving others, and then the work may not turn out well, because one is clumsy or whatever. But one can also deceive oneself and say: "I do everything for the love of God" and then... who cares? And I don't make an effort. If I have really chosen that supernatural motive, the usual thing will be to make an effort. And if not, we can rectify it, recognise it without getting discouraged and fight again. Thank God, we can sanctify ourselves with tasks that go wrong, because the supernatural motive is enough. That's what it's about!

Our Father says in one of his letters, "An essential part of this work, the sanctification of ordinary work, which God has entrusted to us, is to do the work itself well, also with human perfection, the faithful fulfilment of all professional and social obligations." ^[5] It looks forward to the result, because it is inseparable from what went before. If the sanctification of

one's profession depends on the supernatural motive, when the work is taken seriously as an end, it necessarily leads to doing it well; that is why he says that human perfection is an essential part of it.

All honest work

A consoling consequence is that all honest work is important, because it can be done for a supernatural motive, which is love of God and service to others. All work – big or small, important or less important in human terms – can be the material and channel of identification with Christ. Our Father said: "I do not know which is more important, the work of a manual worker or that of the President of the Republic. It depends on the love of God with which they do it." ^[6] They are different in terms of the consequences they have or the influence they can produce, but, in terms of what will remain for eternal life and the meaning it has for the person who does it, the work of a manual worker can be worth much more than that of the President of the Republic.

Our Founder often used to say that the supernatural motive for the sanctification of work is love: "It is well to remember that the dignity of work is based on Love. Man's great privilege is to be able to love and to transcend what is fleeting and ephemeral. He can love other creatures, pronounce an "I" and a "you" which are full of meaning. And he can love God, who opens heaven's gates to us, makes us members of his family and allows us also to talk to him in friendship, face to face." ^[7] From these words, in which St. Josemaría ends by speaking of heaven, we should not forget that the dignity of work is founded on love, and is sanctified when it is motivated and informed by love for God and for others.

In this context, it is also beautiful and exciting to consider that we do not work alone, for the Lord is with us. Love is unitive, love unites us to a God who – by grace – is already in our lives. So it is not only that we offer God our work, but God works with us, we are God's instruments as we work. To the extent and in the proportion that we sanctify it, it is God's work. That is why our Father liked to speak of Opus Dei as *operatio Dei*. Everything we do is God's work, because He also does it with us, we are instruments in His hands.

This should give us a great sense of security when we experience that things go wrong, when we forget to offer a task, because we know this doctrine, which is beautiful. We never quite live it fully, but it doesn't matter, we should keep fighting and not get discouraged. *Nunc coepi*, now I begin, and never alone. My work is God's work.

Service and working with others

Another relevant aspect of this doctrine is illuminated when we consider that all human work is service. It is worth remembering the dependence of our work on that of other people, because often – if not always – in a very explicit or less obvious way, our work depends on that of other people, and vice versa. They are interlinked.

That's why it's important to facilitate other people's work when it depends on ours. This is often the case. When it is done in a team it is obvious, but also in ordinary life, in the jobs we have – for example, doing them on time has an impact on other people being able to do theirs on time. And so there is a series of links between one person and another that we cannot ignore, thinking: "I'll do my own thing and let others worry about themselves."

Part of doing one's work well is thinking about how it influences the work of others, and therefore facilitating, or at least not hindering, the work of others, if we were to delay it or do it badly. To sanctify work we have to think about how we facilitate the work of those around us.

Another dimension is the sanctification of interpersonal relationships, which are part of one's profession. It is important to facilitate the work of others, but also to make it pleasant, to take care of our spirit of service, to cover for others when they cannot do something they should. Our Father has insisted on this: when we see that a person does not manage to finish his work, we help him without him realising it, as far as possible. Fraternity at work is part of our sanctification, because the whole of human life is connected.

Because of the unity of life we strive for, work is the hinge and is essential in our life. I would like to bring up a text from the *Instruction on*

the supernatural spirit of the Work, in which our Father speaks of work within our unity of life: “Uniting professional work with ascetical struggle and contemplation (something which might seem impossible, but which is necessary, in order to contribute towards reconciling the world with God), and turning this ordinary work into an instrument of personal sanctification and apostolate. Is this not a noble and great ideal, for which it is worthwhile giving one’s life?” [8] From this arises the concept of unity of life, which is to unite work with ascetical struggle and contemplation, necessary to help reconcile the world with God, and to convert this ordinary work into an instrument of personal sanctification and apostolate.

[1] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 81

[2] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 47

[3] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, 359

[4] See Thomas Aquinas, *De principiis naturæ*, cap. 4.

[5] St. Josemaría, *Letter 31 May 1954*, 18

[6] See *Notes from St. Josemaría’s preaching*, February 6, 1967

[7] St. Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 48

[8] St. Josemaría, *Instruction*, 19 March 1934, 33

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Pastoral Letters

Letter of February 16, 2023 on Some Attitudes and Expressions of Fraternity

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

1. With this letter, I wish to invite you to consider with me some implications of those words of our Lord that we have so often meditated