

COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 59

Jesus, a man of work 2

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Today's passages from the *Compendium* seek to show the divine link between our human work here on earth and that of the divine order.

The Sabbath is to be a day of rest and relaxation and a time to refresh ourselves after working tirelessly. "During his earthly ministry Jesus works tirelessly, accomplishing powerful deeds to free men and women from sickness, suffering and death.

The Sabbath – which the Old Testament had put forth as a day of liberation and which, when observed only formally, its authentic significance – is reaffirmed by Jesus in its original meaning: 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mk 2:27)''.

However, it is noted that Jesus healed persons on this day of rest – does this mean that we should work on the Sabbath? The *Compendium* explains "By healing people on this day of rest (cf Mt 12:9-14; Mk 3:1-6; Lk 6:6-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6), he wishes to show that the Sabbath is his, because he is truly the Son of God, and that it is the day on which men should dedicate themselves to God and to others.

Freeing people from evil, practising brotherhood and sharing: these give to work its noblest meaning that which allows humanity to set out on the path to the eternal Sabbath, when rest will become the festive celebration to which men and women inwardly aspire. It is precisely in orienting humanity toward this experience of God's Sabbath and of his fellowship of life that work is the inauguration on earth of the new creation."

Something that we must always understand is that the activities we engage in are in fact a way for us to not only improve the universe, but to also transform it. Our work fits in with our purpose and God's divine plan for creation. "Human activity aimed at enhancing and transforming the universe can and must unleash the perfections which find their origin and model in the uncreated Word.

In fact, the Pauline and Johannine writings bring to light the Trinitarian dimension of creation, in particular the link that exists between the Son-Word-the Logos-and creation (cf Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17). Created in him and through him, redeemed by him, the universe is not a happenstance conglomeration but a 'cosmos' (*Redemptor Hominis*)."

It is therefore our responsibility to seek to understand why we are doing what we are doing, or more importantly, seek guidance from God on what we should be doing. Everything we do must bring glory to God. It therefore "falls to man to discover the order within it and to heed this order, bringing it to fulfilment: In Jesus Christ the visible world which God created for man – the world that, when sin entered, 'was subjected to futility' (Rom 8:20; cf. *ibid.* 8:19-22) – recovers again its original link with the divine source of Wisdom and Love (*Redemptor Hominis*).

In this way – that is, bringing to light in ever greater measure "the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8), in creation, human work becomes a service raised to the grandeur of God."

"Work represents a fundamental dimension of human existence as participation not only in the act of creation but also in that of redemption. Those who put up with the difficult rigours of work in union with Jesus, cooperate in a certain sense, with the Son of God in his work of redemption

and show that they are disciples of Christ bearing his cross, every day, in the activity they are called to do.

In this perspective, work can be considered a means of sanctification and an enlivening of earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). Understood in this way, work is an expression of man's full humanity, in his historical condition and his eschatological orientation.

Man's free and responsible action reveals his intimate relationship with the Creator and his creative power. At the same time, it is a daily aid in combating the disfigurement of sin, even when it is by the sweat of his brow that man earns his bread."

Next week we deal with the duty to work".