

Go to Joseph

In 1955, Venerable Pope Pius XII established the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. On a day that is celebrated internationally as May Day, with a focus on the rights of workers, Pius XII sought to unite work with prayer. The Holy Father hoped that we would place ourselves under the caring intercession of St. Joseph and find ourselves strengthened for our daily labor through the gift of faith and the grace of prayer.

St. Joseph, in his life here on earth, came to understand well the necessary balance of work and prayer. As a skilled carpenter, he dedicated many hours to the labor of woodworking. But we know that, as he found himself caught up in the story of salvation with his Holy Family, he would find himself needing to be strongly tethered to God and filled with grace in order to capably face the daily challenges of work and life.

Besides serving as a model of work and prayer, St. Joseph can also teach us the value of work and rest. We see in the gospels that Joseph was a dreamer. Awaking from restful slumber, he would better understand the “why” of his daily labor and the “where” of his life’s destination. God had a plan for Joseph. By stepping away from his saw, his plane, and his lathe, Joseph could close his eyes and see more clearly how God was with him and how God was reassuring him to remain diligent in his labors, dedicated to faith and prayer, and devoted to his family.

So many of us find our daily labors exhausting. The work of each day—whether at an office, a factory, a farm, or a school—can leave us feeling burdened and overwhelmed. Juggling the demands of a job, a family, and all our other responsibilities can cause many of us to develop insomnia. The

worries of life, compounded by the worries of the world, can easily trigger some bad habits for far too many of us. Rather than closing our eyes to dream, we find ourselves awake and staring at a screen.

But the world of gaming, videos, social media, or anything else that we might use to distract us cannot replace the gift of a good sleep. We need to follow the example of Joseph, investing in our work each day while allowing ourselves to rest each night. “To sleep, perchance to dream,” Shakespeare’s Hamlet once pondered. But where Hamlet would say, “aye, there’s the rub,” Joseph calls us to faith and not to despair. Joseph experienced himself the Divine Presence that comes to us in sleep, and he promises us the same.

We seek St. Joseph’s intercession. With two feast days, on the nineteenth of March and the first of May, the Church clearly wants us to lean on Joseph and to learn from him. His intercession can assist us to deepen our faith, inspired by the pattern of the holy builder’s life. We ask St. Joseph to lend a hand as we construct a life for ourselves that resembles his, a life built on a foundation of good work and virtuous prayer.

May St. Joseph help us to find balance, especially when our life and our world seem off kilter. Through peace-filled rest and grace-filled prayer, may we find ourselves strengthened to face the challenges of each day. And, when fear and uncertainty engulf us, may we follow the direction of St. André Bessette and “*Ite ad Joseph.*” Going to Joseph, and following his example, we will no doubt find ourselves encouraged and strengthened to face the challenges of each new day.