

NOVENA FOR THE INTERCESSION OF
SAINT JOSEPH

for the employed, under-employed and unemployed



Originally created by the St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Moore Haven, Florida; adapted by St. Francis
of Assisi Catholic Church, San Antonio, TX

Day 1 Novena Reflection

On May 1st, Communist Regimes used to parade their weapons of destruction through the streets of major cities held captive under Marxist oppression. They called the day May Day and International Workers Day. Some still do. The Marxists proclaimed that a worker's paradise could be achieved through a counterfeit ideology which promised that a new man and a new society could come about without the need for a Savior. It was during that period that the Catholic Church emphasized the Feast of Joseph the Worker. One of its goals was to expose false ideologies and proclaim that the dignity of all human work is rooted in the dignity of the worker, who is created in the Image of God.

Novena Prayer Seeking the Intercession of St. Joseph the Worker

Beloved Father, through the life, death and resurrection of your only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, we became your adopted sons and daughters. Through Baptism we are members of His Body, the Church. Our Savior Jesus taught us that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother." We thank you because that promise includes each one of us. As members of the family of Jesus we turn to you in prayer. In Jesus, we are joined in a communion of love, along with the saints--the holy ones. They are the great cloud of witnesses the bible speaks of. *They have gone before us marked with the sign of redemption and lived their lives by faith. (Hebrews 12:1)* They inspire us by their holy lives. They also pray for us from their place in your communion of love which is stronger than death.

In a special place of honor in that communion is St. Joseph. He said YES to your call to be the chaste husband of Mary (the Mother of the Lord), the foster father of Jesus, and the Guardian of the Redeemer. A man of few words, Joseph spoke with action and calls us to the way of active faith. The Patron of all workers also shows us the dignity of all human work when joined to Jesus. Joseph always said YES to your invitations of grace. He always put Mary and Jesus ahead of himself. He invites us to do the same in our daily lives. The carpenter who taught the child Jesus to work with wood in the workshop of Nazareth shows us that all human work participates in the loving plan of redemption. *At 33 years old, Jesus, the carpenter's son (Matthew 13:55), freely embraced the wood of the Cross and reconciled us to you, and to one another, for the sake of the world.* Joseph loved Jesus and Jesus loved Joseph. That love continues.

St. Joseph, you who loved Jesus with a genuine fatherly love, we ask you to pray for us as we follow the Way of Jesus in our everyday lives. You understand the challenges of raising a family, earning a living, facing the difficulties of life, and always remaining faithful to God.

We now turn to you and ask for your intercession. By your prayers, obtain for us the special graces we need to be faithful to our own specific vocation and live our lives in service to Jesus as you did.

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PAUSE FOR PRAYER INTENTIONS

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Day 2 Novena Reflection

A Christian understanding of work views it through the lens of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. God Incarnate, Jesus the Christ, was a worker! From the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, to his public ministry, to the Cross, Jesus was always about the Father's work. When confronted by some misguided religious leaders for teaching on the Sabbath, he told them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." (John 5:17) All human work, when it is joined to the work of Jesus, is made holy and helps those engaged in it to grow in holiness. The early Christian Church Father Gregory Nazianzus expressed the implications of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in these insightful words, "Whatever was not assumed was not healed!" Because the entire human experience was assumed by Jesus, work, as a part of that human experience, has now been transformed by Christ the worker!

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Day 3 Novena Reflection

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council addressed the dignity of work by pointing to the humanity of Jesus: He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam, He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin. (Paragraph #22)

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Day 4 Novena Reflection

As a child, Jesus learned from Joseph the Worker how to work with wood. He would later climb upon a wooden cross to re-create humanity, making it new through His great work of redemption. All the work of Jesus Christ was joined to His Heavenly Father's work. That is the same relationship which we have with the Father through Him. Though there is some biblical support that the toil or "sweat" of work is due to the Fall (*See, Gen 3:19*), human work is not a punishment for sin. Work occurred before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Our first parents tilled the garden. That was work. Jesus was always doing the work of the One who sent Him (John 9:3-4) and we are invited to do the same in the work which is part of our daily human existence.

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Day 5 Novena Reflection

The worship of the early Christians became known as liturgy. The Greek word can be loosely translated to work or duty. Liturgy is the work of the Church. For the early believers, the world was not a place to be avoided, but became their workshop! They understood that they were in the world, precisely to bring all men and women to the Font of Baptism and include them in the Body of Christ, the Church. Then, they too could participate in the work of Jesus. This work continues today. Col1, 15-20 explains that all things were created in Jesus Christ (see Col 1:15-20) and are being recreated as His work continues through His Body, the Church of which we are members. The Church serves as a seed of this very transfiguration. The unfolding of all of this is what St. Paul calls a plan and a mystery, to bring all things together under heaven and on earth in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1: 9-10)

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Day 6 Novena Reflection

For the Christian, no matter what we are doing as work, we are admonished by the Apostle Paul, in Colossians 3, to "do it as unto the Lord". That choice, that exercise of our human freedom, deciding to treat our work differently, places us in the position to receive the graces we need to both view it - and do it - differently. It enables our work to change the world both within us and around us. This way of viewing work includes all human work, not just what is sometimes viewed as the "spiritual stuff." God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, did not just do what is often called the "spiritual stuff." All human work sanctifies us - and changes the world around us.

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Day 7 Novena Reflection

In the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans, St Paul tells them that creation "groans" for the full revelation of the sons and daughters of God. We can have a new relationship to the created order, beginning now, by choosing to live our faith. We live in the Son, through whom and for whom, all was created - and all is being re-created. When we embrace our daily work with a mind renewed by the Holy Spirit, we begin to comprehend the plan of God, including the Christian view of work. We live in an age which has lost sight of the dignity of work because we have lost sight of the dignity of the human worker. In the industrial age, men and women were often reduced to mere instruments in a society that emphasized productivity over the dignity of the human person, the worker. The technological age promised something different but has failed to deliver on that promise. Too often, men and women are still viewed as instruments and objects rather than persons and gifts.

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Day 8 Novena Reflection

In 1981 John Paul released a letter entitled "On Human Work". In the introductory paragraph, he wrote: "Work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual... Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it, in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning, therefore he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus, work bears a particular mark, of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense, it constitutes its very nature."

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Day 9 Novena Reflection

The Catholic Church proclaims that the path to true freedom and Human flourishing is found in walking as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Catholicism affirms that there is a dignity to all human work, no matter what type of work it is, precisely, because of the dignity of the human worker engaged in it. That worker is created in the Image and Likeness of God. That dignity was always a part of the Fathers loving plan of creation. It was elevated to even greater heights through the Incarnation of Jesus, the Worker of Nazareth. During the Feast of St. Joseph, the Worker, we should reflect upon the creative and redemptive value of all human work, especially when it is joined to Jesus Christ the Worker.

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