

“Saint Joseph and the dignity of labour...”

– on 01st May 2017

Let's begin with his devotion to Saint Joseph as there's quite a list of things that connect Pope Francis to this saint. Among them the choice of the date for the beginning of his pontificate the 19th of March, Saint Joseph's feast day, and the choice of the nard flower symbolic of this saint on his coat of arms.



Then in July 2013 his decision to consecrate Vatican City State not just to Saint Michael, as had been previously planned, but to Saint Joseph as well. And on a more personal note his admission to cherishing a wooden statue representing a dormant Saint Joseph, dressed in gold trimmed dark green and red garments according to Hispanic iconography, by which he places prayer requests. Simply because as he mentioned when he confided to us this personal gesture: “He's a carpenter and he gets the job done, even though he sometimes makes you wait”.

As for what links Pope Francis to Saint Joseph, International Labour Day and workers why not shine the spotlight on his words the 1st of May 2013, so the very first year of his pontificate, during his weekly general audience.

Words which focus precisely on work and the figure of Saint Joseph. In a special way on the role played by Joseph as the legal father who teaches his son his skills as a carpenter in the workshop in Nazareth on a daily basis and shares with him, the efforts, the commitment, the satisfactions and problems that come with the job.

On this occasion Pope Francis goes on to remind us of the dignity and importance of work. The Book of Genesis, he says, tells us that God created man and woman entrusting them with the task of filling the earth and subduing it, which does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work: “Work is part of God's loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way participate in the

work of creation! Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person...it gives you the ability to maintain yourself, your family, to contribute to the growth of your nation. And here I think of the difficulties which, in various countries, today afflicts the world of work and business; I think of how many, and not just young people, are unemployed, many times due to a purely economic



conception of society, which seeks selfish profit, beyond the parameters of social justice. I wish to extend an invitation to solidarity to everyone, and I would like to encourage those in public office to make every effort to give new impetus to employment, this means caring for the dignity of the person, but above all I'd like to say do not lose hope; St. Joseph also experienced moments of difficulty, but he never lost faith and was able to overcome them, in the certainty that God never abandons us. And then I would like to speak especially to you young people: be committed to your daily duties, your study, your work, to relationships of friendship, to helping towards others; your future also depends on how you live these precious years of your life. Do not be afraid of commitment, of sacrifice and do not look with fear towards the future; keep your hope alive: there is always a light on the horizon".

But while Pope Francis on this occasion shares with us words of encouragement as we've just noticed he also chooses to highlight some of the evils of society in the area of work and denounces once again, the practice some companies have of adopting policies that favor profit over human dignity or even human life. And then uses an image to express how fundamental work is to the dignity of the person:"... work to use an image 'anoints' with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God who has worked and still works, who also acts".

One last word perhaps: let's hope the prayer requests that Pope Francis places by the reclining and dormant figure of Saint Joseph are eventually answered...As he once assured us, they always are!