

[Readings: Genesis 1:26-2:3; PS. 90; 1 Thess. 4:1b-2, 9-12; Matt. 6:31-34]

What famous “pairs” usually don’t go well together, at least in our minds at first glance? Religion and Politics. Faith and Science. Faith and Reason. Husbands and Wives! Parents and Children? In-laws and In-laws?

How about Faith and Work, Religion and Labor? How do ethics and morality affect the workplace? The management? The workers? The shareholders? The goods or the services they provide?

It all starts with what we believe is the definition of work. Work is the good or service you provide because of your talent, training and education.

Now, imagine the “Work” of our Divine Worker, or better, our Divine Creator. We accept the idea that God is the Creator of the Universe and all that is in it – things visible and invisible – which we profess every Sunday and Holy Day. Then that means that God is OUR Creator as well. And if WE are made in God’s image and likeness, then you and I have a creative part inside ourselves.

That is what we honor today, on Labor Day. We thank God for that creative part within us. For the talent God gives us. We thank God for the training and education opportunities God makes happen in our lives. We thank God for the blessings of prosperity, our homes, our food, our clothing and our very lives. All of this is the result of our uniting our faith with our work.

Truly blessed work is made for people, not people for work. The “bottom line” is not only about making a profit, or merely eliminating the competition. Truly virtuous work is about providing the best work places and conditions for all who labor. When we provide a healthy environment that is clean, efficient and stress-free, workers become more productive. There is an attitude of gratitude that is contagious. When workers are justly compensated with a livable wage and helpful benefits, it branches out to job satisfaction.

Currently, in our country, two-thirds of all workers say that they are overworked, undercompensated, and unappreciated. The Christian employer who provide workers with reasonable, do-able work, proper compensation and frequent affirmation and encouragement mirror the “work” that God does for us.

And what about the workers, the laborers, the employees? There is the same moral and ethical imperative to provide a full day of work for a full day's pay. To encourage fellow workers to do and to be their full potential. Managers and business owners share with me their frustration of some workers who give only the bare minimum, who have no loyalty to the company, who are there only for the paycheck. In this post-pandemic world, the current generation of younger workers will move every three, four or five years from job to job. Empty nester parents cry when their children return home from college or after losing their job, with no employment goals, and no future plans.

When we are not productive, a part of us dies. We are not living to our full potential as "co-creators" with God. We have it within our power to change what needs to be changed. Even if it begins with our mindset. Even if it means taking a leap of faith. Even if it means sacrifice for the greater good.

And so we pray. We pray for those who have lost their job or who have suffered a cut in their hours/wages. We pray for those who are underemployed, not earning enough money to provide for themselves and for their families. We pray for those who are looking for work but are not finding it. We pray for those who have secure jobs with a livable wage. We pray for owners of businesses and managers. And we pray in thanksgiving for those who now enjoy the blessings and comfort of retirement.

"Lord, give success to the work of our hands. Give success to the work of our hands." AMEN!