

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Thank you to Canon Stein for inviting me to participate in this preparatory novena to St. Joseph. It is a blessing to be here with you all for this preaching series, at St. Joseph Shrine, in the year of St. Joseph, and to offer the Mass of the Ages for the glory of our Triune God. As we again “Go to Joseph” for his example, we look today at how he can teach us about the dignity of work.

In a world of sloth, Joseph Exemplar Opificum—Joseph is the model worker.

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen said that “Sloth is a malady of the will which causes us to neglect our duties. It is physical when it manifests itself in laziness, procrastination, idleness, softness, indifference and nonchalance. It is spiritual when it shows itself in an indifference to character betterment, a distaste for the spiritual, a hurried crowding of devotions, a lukewarmness and failure to cultivate new virtue.”

A malady is a disease or disorder. So a malady of the will means that our will is sick—and therefore our ability to choose the good is a little off. When a person is slothful, they do not choose what is best for them, either physically or spiritually. Sloth is a disease that is far more contagious than the coronavirus and far more dangerous. So many of us find ourselves binging on TV shows or YouTube videos when we know we should be doing something more productive. How often does that initial laziness lead to sinful choices which put our souls in danger? When the temptation to sloth comes, and we find ourselves wanting to just sit there, not pray or not work, we must “Go to Joseph”!

As you know, he was a craftsman. Some believe that a better translation for “carpenter” in gospels would be “construction worker”. Joseph didn’t just make little wooden toys—if he did that at all—but he built buildings, and likely worked with stone as well as wood. His hands would have been calloused, he would have come home from work sweaty and dusty, and he would have shown Our Lord, just as he shows us, the value of working.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis in his recent document on St. Joseph, *Patris Corde*, said that “Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom...”

And when our heavenly Father sent His Son to become incarnate, He sent Him to be raised under the care of Joseph the worker. The Father entrusted His Son to Joseph to be taught in His humanity, how to work. I believe that this was included in God's plan of salvation because Our Lord was to save us not merely as souls but as humans—body and soul together. And so in the body in which our Lord veiled his divinity, He had to work with Joseph. In doing this He sanctified work and prepared Himself for the work of our salvation on the cross.

Sloth is merely a resistance to the way God wants to sanctify us. He wants us to work, to perform our duties so that we might advance as body and soul toward heaven. And so if we are to overcome our sloth, we too must look to Joseph for motivation. And by working in the way that we each have been called, we will be participating in the work of salvation.

Our Lord, of course, did the real heavy lifting in this work. He is the one that died on the cross for us. And since we are members of His Body, we too, must work in our bodies; and by doing so participate in the work of salvation. Since we have been called to follow our Lord, we must learn to work how he did; by imitating the grit and work ethic of Joseph.

So whether you are a breadwinner or homemaker, a student or a teacher, an accountant or a nurse, whether you work from home or work on a construction site; your work matters. Every little act in your job and your daily duties at home is a part of how God wants to sanctify you, bring you to Himself, and have you participate in your salvation. When you are tempted to selfishness, laziness, procrastination, or avoidance, call upon the name of Joseph. He knows what it is like to fight these temptations, and overcome them by the grace of God. Do not be afraid of the effort this work takes. God will give you the grace, because he desires that you work now so as to enjoy the fruits of your labors in eternity.

St. Joseph, model of workers, pray for us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.