



Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time September 4, 2016

A Recipe for Discipleship

By Janel Esker

I love following a recipe that leads to a beautiful, delicious dish, but I often make a very amateurish move—I start cooking without first reading the recipe to the end. I'll start to sauté the onions and garlic and then discover I should have marinated the chicken overnight.

The tower-builder and king in today's Gospel sound like me. But Jesus was talking about something far more serious: the requirements for discipleship. He suspected the large crowds following him didn't know what

they were getting into. They hadn't read the whole "Recipe for Discipleship," which included carrying your cross, leaving family members behind, and renouncing possessions. For many, these requirements were too much.

Have you read the recipe? Here are some of the instructions:

- Make God your first priority—not your money, family, or schedule.
- Carry your cross every day without complaining.
- Give generously and discard possessions that possess you.
- Marinate your heart in forgiveness.
- Make others the center of your world.
- Be grateful.
- Believe in God even when all you feel is doubt.
- Be prepared to lay down your life—for a friend and for the Lord.

Jesus challenges us to read the whole recipe and still commit wholeheartedly to discipleship. The result is more beautiful than a decadent cheesecake or the finest beef bourguignon. It's the kingdom of God—and eternal life. †

Sunday Readings

Wisdom 9:13–18b

"Who can know your counsel, unless you give Wisdom and send your holy spirit from on high?"

Philemon 9–10, 12–17

"Have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a brother."

Luke 14:25–33

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

A Word From Pope Francis

I feel tremendous gratitude to all those who are committed to working in and for the Church. ...[We] must never [forget] how many Christians are giving their lives in love. They help so many people to be healed or to die in peace in makeshift hospitals. They are present to those enslaved by different addictions....They devote themselves to the education of children and young people. They take care of the elderly... They look for ways to communicate values in hostile environments. They are dedicated [to] showing an immense love for humanity... This witness comforts and sustains me in my own effort to overcome selfishness.

—*Evangelii Gaudium*, 76



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?
- What form of Christian service will I commit to this week, this year?



Labors of Love

By Valerie Schultz

The first Labor Day, celebrated in 1882 in New York City, was actually a demonstration. Workers marched to demand eight-hour workdays, something most of us now take for granted. In 1894, the first Monday of

September became a federal holiday in honor of the contributions of workers to the well-being of our country.

It is lovely to take an official break to celebrate. Every job has its hazards, some of which can be life-threatening. Some workers are exposed to hazardous chemicals. Others, even office workers, may suffer physical strain or injury. Some put their life on the line; others their reputation. Sometimes we laborers get discouraged. We may think brain surgery is more important than collecting trash, but all labors are connected: even surgeons have garbage. None of us

experience Eden in our jobs, yet I suspect our work fulfills many of us and teaches all of us what it means to be human. Our labors ideally mesh and unite to comprise a functioning society.

Giving birth was surely the hardest physical labor I ever did, but it was also the most rewarding. Every phase of parenting involves a renewed labor and reminds us that we are all works in progress. We are born pliable, capable, hopeful, and we do well to regularly reflect on our endeavors and blessings. †

Adapted from a column in the September 2004 issue of *Liguorian*.

Life Links With St. Joseph the Worker

Each of us possesses God-given gifts and talents. How do you use them? Do you try to touch the lives of others in positive ways? Do you see your abilities as ways of honoring God and giving him credit? Do you see work as an expression of love? Without that perspective, it's easy to see work as nothing more than a means of financial reward.

Picture St. Joseph at work. Rather than picturing how he worked—tackling

large timbers, chunks of stone, metal implements, and more—picture why: to serve God and support his family. This saint reveals the connection between the role of worker and the role of servant. In this light, we all can work with the same vigor and purpose as he did.

As patron of workers, St. Joseph helps those who are out of work, those deciding on an educational or career path, and those in established occupations. He's a model for all forms of work, not just for

employees and employers, but also for stay-at-home parents, elderly volunteers, and young children in school. Where there is work to be done, Joseph will protect, equip, and guide us. Go to him. †

Adapted from *Husband, Father, Worker: Questions & Answers About St. Joseph* by Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ; Fr. José Antonio Bertolin, OSJ; and Rick Sarkisian, PhD, © 2012 Liguori Publications

Prayer of Pope Pius X to St. Joseph the Worker

Glorious St. Joseph, model of all who work, obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my many sins; to work with gratitude and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop, by my labor, the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation and patience, never recoiling before weariness or difficulties; to work, above all, with pure intention and detachment from self, having always before my eyes death and the account which I must then render of time lost, of talents wasted, of good omitted, and of vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all in imitation of you, O patriarch Joseph. This shall be my motto in life and death. Amen.

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your call to discipleship. Give me the grace to respond to your call with courage, love, and humility.

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

September 5–10

- Mon. Weekday (Labor Day):
1 Corinthians 5:1–8 / Luke 6:6–11
- Tue. Weekday:
1 Corinthians 6:1–11 / Luke 6:12–19
- Wed. Weekday:
1 Corinthians 7:25–31 / Luke 6:20–26

- Thu. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
Micah 5:1–4a or Romans 8:28–30 /
Matthew 1:1–16, 18–23
- Fri. St. Peter Claver: 1 Corinthians 9:16–19,
22b–27 / Luke 6:39–42
- Sat. Weekday:
1 Corinthians 10:14–22 / Luke 6:43–49