

## WORK AS A GIFT GIVEN

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*Let them esteem work as a gift  
and as a sharing in the creation, redemption and service of the human community. (Art. 16)*

In his Rule of 1223, St. Francis speaks of those friars "to whom God has given the grace of working." Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines grace as "unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification." Our Constitutions reaffirm that: "For St. Francis, work is a gift and to work is a grace." (art. 23)

We have been given many gifts. We all have received both natural gifts (talents) and supernatural gifts (charisms). All these gifts require our effort for them to be expressed, in other words, it takes work. We utilize these gifts through work for the benefit of our families our Church our world and ourselves. Even our spiritual gifts (charisms) help us to do the Church's work in the world.

The truth is, very few of us have "churchy" charisms (gifts for teaching CCD, helping with RCIA, or singing in the choir). Most charisms are intended to be used in the marketplace rather than in the Church. The Church's mission is to evangelize the *world*, to sanctify the *world*, to renew the *world*, and that is where most of us are called to use our gifts. Charisms of administration are needed in the secular world to bring gospel values into government and business. Gifts of compassion, hospitality and service are needed in our neighborhoods just as much as in our parishes. (Ron Ryan, "The Power is On," *New Covenant*, July, 1993)

Our work is the means God has given us that allow us to exercise, develop and use our gifts. How tragic it would be if these gifts were not used! This puts the act of "working" in a different perspective. From this perspective, Sr. Joan Chittester, OSB, explains that "Work is not a nuisance to be avoided. Work is a gift to be given."

Work is my gift to the world. It is my social fruitfulness. It ties me to my neighbor and binds me to the future. It lights up that spark in me that is most like the God of Genesis. I tidy the garden and plant the garden and distribute the goods of the garden and know that it is good. (Chittester, "Work: Participation in Creation," *Weavings*)

The Church does not mince words about the importance of our giving the gift of ourselves through our work to create, sustain, and renew the Church and the world. *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* says "A member who does not work at the growth of the body to the full extent of his gifts must be considered useless both to the Church and to himself." So be useful, give your gifts, enrich the world - do good work(s)!

### Dialogue Starters

1. What is the greatest gift that you give to the Church and the world through your work?

2. How would you like to be able to give more of the gift of yourself through work?