

## **WORK - OUR SHARING IN GOD'S ON-GOING CREATIVE ACTIVITY**

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TGIF! Isn't that the most widely known and most wholeheartedly agreed to acronym in America. Thank God it's Friday! Thank God we're done with work for the week and can get on the business of our real lives with our families and friends. A recent cover of *Newsweek* magazine featured the cartoon character Dilbert accompanied by 2 inch high lettering which expressed this sentiment in even stronger terms: WORK IS HELL

Do we have it all wrong? We act as though work were a curse and are thankful to be freed from the yoke. Is work a curse? Doesn't the Bible say that our work will be difficult: "By the sweat of our brow you shall get to eat bread." (Gen. 3:19) Yes, it certainly does; but this is a description of work after the Fall. Let's go to God's word from earlier sections of the book of Genesis to see what the Creator originally had in mind for humanity in relation to work.

First, consider the act of Creation itself:

"God created mankind in his image, in the image of God. He created mankind, man and woman he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and bring it under your control. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of the heaven and all living things.'" (Gen 1:27-28)

This entire process of bringing the earth under human dominion is accomplished precisely through that purposeful human effort we call "work."

Now, if we stop to think about it - that man is meant to work should come as no surprise - after all, we are created in God's image and what is the most striking image of our God found in Genesis? Who is our God who brings life and order from nothingness and the void? God the Creator! Work, our purposeful activity, is one of the most powerful ways in which we reflect the image of the Creator.

The Garden of Eden. Paradise! We all have our paradise fantasies of that place where life is perfect. Mine places me under a cabana sipping a cool, tropical drink, lounging near the ocean, soft breezes caressing my face and waves lapping at my toes. A place where everything is taken care of for me. Snap my fingers and another drink appears just like that. No work here. Not for me at least.

God sees Paradise a little differently. Here is a quote from Genesis 2:15: "Yahweh God took Adam and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it." God wanted humankind to work even in paradise. Work is part of God's original plan for man.

Work done as God intended is not a curse but a blessing. Work is our magnificent opportunity to reflect the image of our Creator. God created man and woman in His image and empowered humanity to carry on his creation. Creation isn't finished yet and we are, in a fundamental way, called to be co-creators.

Work is what we do to continue what God wanted done. Work is co-creative. Keeping a home that is beautiful and ordered and nourishing is co-creative. Working in a machine shop that makes gears for tractors is co-creative. Working in an office that processes loan application for people who are themselves trying to make life more humane is co-creative. (Sr. Joan Chittester, "Work Participation in Creation". Weavings)

Our Rule has it right when it describes work as a "sharing in the creation." Well, maybe it should be "sharing in the Creation" but I won't quibble. There's another change I'd suggest: Secular Franciscans should begin saying "TGIM" - Thank God It's Monday! Now that will get some interesting conversations started!

#### Dialogue Starters

1. Do you view work as a blessing or a curse?
2. How are you a co-creator with the Father in you everyday life?