

How to View Your Work Day as a Catholic [LAURA HENSLEY](#) [MAY 23, 2018](#)

We all know some holy people. Maybe it's your parish priest, a local community of religious sisters, or the reverent couple you see at daily Mass. But for some reason, we think their holiness could never be achieved for ourselves. Sometimes we can't imagine how we could bring holiness into both our work and home life.

Our busy lives seems to leave out God. There is our busy morning routines getting the kids up and out the door. Jobs push us to blur the lines of what is right and what is not quite wrong. Busyness leaves us disillusioned with our marriage, feeling like this is not the life we were dreaming of. Finally, there is so much evil.

How can we be holy in this secular world? Busyness is what Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński sets out to dispel. Check out a few of our favorite thoughts from his book *Sanctify Your Daily Life: How to Transform Work into a Source of Strength, Holiness and Joy*.

There is work, and then there is Catholic view of work

Many feel like thoughts of hard work, love of our jobs and success above all else are the ultimate goal of human life. Those outside the Catholic Church are looked down upon as lazy workers, less efficient, and therefore less successful than those who are not Catholic. But Catholic work is different. It started with God's work first. God created our jobs, tasks, and technology. They are gifts given to us by the Creator Himself. We are sent into the world to bring others to Christ. We are to use our vocations, passions, interactions with others to do just that.

The fruits of our work

Just as we have the fruits of the Holy Spirit, there are also fruits of our labor. Possessions to satisfy our own needs and those of our families, security, justice, love, alms giving, and frugality are just a few of those fruits. "...The duty of work itself to multiply goods for our neighbors' needs, so that we have more to share with them," writes Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński.

Prayer in work

Scripture tells us to "pray constantly" but many of us leave our prayer life behind when we enter the office. We are busied by the phone, computers, customers or production lines. We quickly forget the importance of daily prayer, even when we're at the office or on the job site. "Prayer continues to be the greatest need of our soul, the most wonderful agent of sanctification, and the best way of adoring God," explains Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński. "It must therefore continue to occupy its proper place; we cannot lose any part of it, in spite of the increasing deluge of work."

Redemptive work

We toil in daily work which was brought about by Original Sin. Work seems to be more difficult when we are consumed by sin. Our own resistance to work reflects our resistance to God.

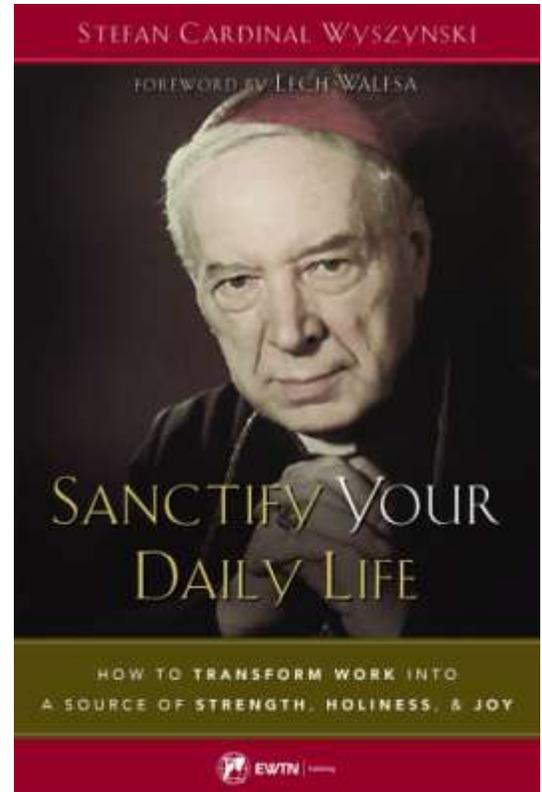
Think of the hardest rock and a sculptor. Blow by painful blow, he works the material into a beautiful work of art. This is what God does for us as the sculptor. We are resistant to be broken and chipped away. Thankfully, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński explains that "work, by its difficulty, redeems, liberates, ennobles, and sanctifies." Just as the gardener works the land removing the hard dirt and rocks, the end result of beautiful plants and flowers gives us hope and redeems us.

Time for work and rest

God gave us a timeline to work and rest by. The work day should include a concrete value of the work. Our jobs should "contribute to the normal development of man's abilities and personal powers," Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński writes. We are not supposed to be so exhausted by the end of the day that we have no energy for our families or social lives. There needs to be a balance between successful work and time to get the other things of lives done outside of our jobs.

If work is too short, we won't have enough time to finish a project before the time is up to move onto the next project. But if work is too long, we lose our strength and perseverance which can become harmful and hateful. Too much work doesn't allow us to complete other obligations such as worship and family life.

We NEED rest in order to increase our concentration, bring us renewal and refreshment, and in turn allows us to work more efficiently than if we didn't rest.



Want to learn more about how to sanctify your life, bring peace and satisfaction to our days on the job, and develop inner peace? *Sanctify Your Daily Life: How to Transform Work into a Source of Strength, Holiness and Joy* by Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński will show you how to transform your work into a source of strength, holiness and even joy!

8 Things Every Catholic Should Know About Work [RYAN MAYER](#) [SEPTEMBER 8, 2015](#)

Americans celebrate Labor Day this week, as we do every year on the first Monday in September. For many, it means an extra day at home barbecuing with the family or out on the lake. No matter how much one might enjoy our jobs, it's always good to have a day off. Labor Day is a great opportunity to reflect on the Church's teaching on the dignity of work. The Church has always had a rich teaching on work, especially in the twentieth-century and since Pope Leo XIII's encyclical [Rerum Novarum](#), which is seen by many as the first formal encyclical in the area of Catholic Social Teaching. While this is an over-simplification, it's definitely true that the Church and the Popes have had a lot to say ever since on the subject of work. Here are some essential points to consider.



1. Work is Essentially Human

“The Church is convinced that work is a fundamental dimension of man’s existence on earth. She is confirmed in this conviction by considering the whole heritage of the many sciences devoted to man: anthropology, palaeontology, history, sociology, psychology and so on; they all seem to bear witness to this reality in an irrefutable way. But the source of the Church’s conviction is above all the revealed word of God, and therefore what is a conviction of the intellect is also a conviction of faith.” ([Laborem Exercens](#), 4)

Work is not a “necessary evil”. It is an integral aspect of what it means to be a fully authentic human person. History affirms that whenever we see, in the anthropological fossil record, the signs of work, we can be sure we have a civilization of rational human beings. Work shouldn't be something we shun or run away from, but something we embrace as an essential part of the human experience.

2. Only Human Beings “Work”

“It is the mind, or reason, which is the predominant element in us who are human creatures; it is this which renders a human being human, and distinguishes him essentially from the brute. And on this very account – that man alone among the animal creation is endowed with reason – it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only things that perish in the use, but those also which, though they have been reduced into use, continue for further use in after time.” ([Rerum Novarum](#), 6)

Animals build things, sometimes impressive things (consider the massive termite colony formations or the delicacy of a spider's web, for example. But as impressive as these things are, they do not constitute “work” in the true sense of the word. Work requires rationality, creativity, and purpose, apart from the instinctual movement to construct a shelter or to catch food. Only human beings “work” because only human beings are made in the Image of the Creator. We alone can give new form and shape and purpose to the created world by the use of our reason and creative faculties.

3. Work is one of the Ways We Participate in Creation

“Every worker is, to some extent, a creator—be he artist, craftsman, executive, laborer or farmer. Bent over a material that resists his efforts, the worker leaves his imprint on it, at the same time developing his own powers of persistence, inventiveness and concentration.” ([Populorum Progressio](#), 27) What a glorious and mysterious calling, that God invites us to participate in His own work of Creation! There is no work that we should consider too beneath us or unworthy of our God-given skill and creativity. The work of Creation continues to unfold through human activity. Consider that the next time you punch your time card.

4. Work is For Man, Not Man for Work

“...the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person...however true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place work is ‘for man’ and not man ‘for work’.” ([Laborem Exercens](#), 6)

People are more important than things. Work is first and foremost about human self-expression and self-actualization and only secondarily about what is produced. Here Pope Saint John Paul II emphasizes the essential personal dimension of work. *Personalism has to be at the center of any authentic view of work because it is only persons who work. It is the person who gives work its dignity apart from the commercial or material value of what is produced or made.* Work is a gift to man to not only provide for his needs, but to live fully as God's Image and likeness.

“...the principle of the priority of labour over capital is a postulate of the order of social morality.” (Laborem Exercens, 15)

Thus, Capitalism and Socialism make the same error; reducing work to production, making the worker a slave to production, rather than the source of its dignity and importance. This is what is meant by the moral obligation to consider labor over production.

5. Work is for the Family

“In a way, work is a condition for making it possible to found a family, since the family requires the means of subsistence which man normally gains through work. Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for the very reason that everyone ‘becomes a human being’ through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education...In fact, the family is simultaneously a community made possible by work and the first school of work, within the home, for every person.” (Laborem Exercens, 10)

Work is oriented toward the family. It should support the family, to be sure, but more than that, it makes the family possible. Ideally, children watch their parents and learn creative, interpersonal, and vocational skills in the family. More than that, the family is the first place virtue and discernment are fostered and these are the backbone of any vocation.

Too often today while parents work to support the family, the family suffers because of work. Mothers (or fathers) are forced to leave the home just to make ends meet. This is not a healthy vision of work or the family. Want to save the family? Foster a view of work that helps the family flourish.

6. Work Has a Spiritual Dimension

“Considered from a Christian point of view, work has an even loftier connotation. It is directed to the establishment of a supernatural order here on earth...” (Populorum Progressio, 28)

Too often, we consider our lives fragmented—spiritual life and “daily” life, as if these can be separated. Have you ever considered that your work is a spiritual enterprise? How could it not be? You are not a body and a soul, you are an embodied soul. Everything we do is spiritual. Make your work your prayer and give glory to God by doing it well and knowing that you contribute not only to your own good but to your neighbors’ good through your work.

7. Work is a Right...and a Duty

“Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that man is called to...” (Laborem Exercens, 10)

Unemployment is not only a serious economic problem, it is a human problem. Each and every human person has been gifted with God-given gifts and talents to use for their own flourishing and for the good of others. We are obliged to use them. Work is a duty. Because only human persons work, work is also a right. Work is, as we’ve said, an integral aspect of human nature and so human beings have a right to work.

8. Work Should Create Solidarity

“...when work is done in common— when hope, hardship, ambition and joy are shared—it brings together and firmly unites the wills, minds and hearts of men. In its accomplishment, men find themselves to be brothers.” ([Populorum Progressio](#), 27)

Work is for man, and men work for themselves, but because man is by nature social, work is also for others. Society can only function and flourish when men work together for the common good. Thus, work should promote solidarity and draw the skills and gifts of men together for their common good. The most fundamental sense in which work fosters solidarity is because it fosters and supports the family. It’s no good skipping over the family if you want to change the world, for every good and healthy society relies on good, holy families to raise up good members of society.

[Ryan Mayer](#)

A “revert” to the faith, Ryan teaches theology at Marin Catholic College Preparatory in the San Francisco Bay Area. He earned a BA from Mt. Angel Seminary in philosophy, theology, and literature and an MA in theology & bioethics from Holy Apostles College & Seminary, as well as certification in health care ethics with distinction from the National Catholic Bioethics Center. He has been published in National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly and has also written for the Dead Philosopher’s Society blog. He is currently completing a MA in philosophy and a licentiate in bioethics from a Pontifical university in Rome. His areas of interest include bioethics, apologetics, pro-life issues, and science & the New Atheism. Ryan also enjoys food, Legos (but who can afford it?), home-brewing, and is a CS Lewis/GK Chesterton-ophile. Follow Ryan: @RyanCMayer