Notes from Fr. Nick

St. Joseph the Worker

Yesterday, May 1st, was the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker. Although Berkeley’s mother church is dedicated to St. Joseph under this title (originally St. Joseph the Workman), this feast day came much later. Like so many other feasts, the Church established it in response to events in the larger world. Communism had designated May Day as a celebration of the common worker. Pope Pius XII capitalized on this holiday by choosing to celebrate St. Joseph, patron of workers, on the same date. The feast entered the Church’s calendar in 1955.

There is a mentality in America that work is a necessary evil, that it is something we have to do in order to make money so we can take time off. People who feel this way are missing out on one of the true joys of human life. Many people toil at difficult and uninteresting jobs out of necessity, but ideally work should engage our minds and bodies with the world around us.

Work has an honored place in creation. The book of Genesis tells us that human beings were placed on the earth to “cultivate and care for it” (Gen. 2:15). Therefore, God expected us to engage in work even before sin entered the world. Thus work can hardly be seen as a necessary evil.

What place does work have in your life? Does it come from a passion or bliss? (Mine certainly does!) Can you do anything to elevate your work into something more rewarding? Has the disruption of your work during the pandemic given you a new appreciation of it? Monastic spirituality speaks of opus Dei, or work of God. With this idea, monks try to be mindful of God’s presence even in the simple things they do. Bringing the dimension of prayer to your work may give everyday tasks more meaning and greater fulfilment to your life.