Joseph the Worker

Feast Day: 1 May

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

To foster deep devotion to Saint Joseph among Catholics, and in response to the "May Day" celebrations for workers sponsored by Communists, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker in 1955.

This feast extends the long relationship between Joseph and the cause of workers in both Catholic faith and devotion. Beginning in the Book of Genesis, the dignity of human work has long been celebrated as a participation in the creative work of God. Saint Joseph, the carpenter and foster father of Jesus, is but one example of the holiness of human labour.

Jesus, too, was a carpenter. He learned the trade from Saint Joseph and spent his early adult years working side-by-side in Joseph's carpentry shop before leaving to pursue his ministry.

In his encyclical Laborem Exercens, Pope John Paul II stated: "*the Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide [social] changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.*"

Saint Joseph is held up as a model of such work. Pius XII emphasized this when he said, "*The spirit flows to you and to all men from the heart of the God-man, Saviour of the world, but certainly, no worker was ever more completely and profoundly penetrated by it than the foster father of Jesus, who lived with Him in closest intimacy and community of family life and work.*"

Joseph worked worked with patience and joy. He provided for his family and so became an example to all workers.