



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

No to 'slave labour'

Wednesday, 1st May 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 19, 8 May 2013)

Man and his dignity come first. Pope Francis recalled this in his homily at morning Mass on Wednesday, 1 May, in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae. Among those who participated were a group of children, adolescents and teenage mothers from the outreach centre “Il Ponte” in Civitavecchia, Italy. Also present were Fr Egidio Smacchia and Fr Sławomir Oder, Postulator of John Paul ii's cause for canonization, with Michèle Smits, collaborator for the same cause. Bishop Luigi Marrucci of Civitavecchia-Tarquiniа, among others, concelebrated.

The Pontiff dedicated his reflection to the theme of work on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, taking cues from the readings of the day: The first from the Book of Genesis (1:26-2:3) and the second from the Gospel of Matthew (13:54-58). These readings speak of God the Creator “who worked to create the world” and the figure of St Joseph, the carpenter and “Jesus' adoptive father” and “from whom Jesus learned to work”.

Today, he said, “we bless St Joseph as a worker, but recalling St Joseph the Worker reminds us of God the Worker and Jesus the Worker. And the theme of work is very, very, very evangelical”.

“Even Jesus”, the Pope said, “worked a lot on earth, in St Joseph's workshop. He worked until the

Cross. He did what the Father had commanded him to do. This makes me think of the many people today who work and have this dignity... Thanks be to God. We know that dignity does not give us power, money or culture. No! It is work that gives us dignity", even if society does not allow for all to work.

The Pope then referred to the social, political and economic systems that in various places around the world are based on exploitation. Thus, they choose "not to pay what is just" and to strive to make maximum profit at any cost, taking advantage of other's work without worrying the least bit about about their dignity". This "goes against God!", he exclaimed, referring to tragic situations that keep shocking us around the world, of which we "read frequently in *L'Osservatore Romano*". The Holy Father quoted the headline in our newspaper on Sunday, 28 April. "It is a title", he said, "that struck me, the day of the tragedy in Bangladesh: 'How to die for 38 euros a month'". The article reported the horrific collapse of the garment factory in Dhaka on 24 April, killing hundreds of workers (as of 8 May, the death toll is reported to be 782). The Holy Father denounced the unsafe conditions that these workers had been left in. "Slave labour", he said, exploits "the most beautiful gift which God gave man: the ability to create, to work, to discover our dignity. How many of our brothers and sisters in the world are in this situation at the hands of these economic, social and political attitudes!".