

Faith Alive!

at Work

**For an Adult Faith Formation Session
Appropriate for use as an RCIA Session**

by

Living Faith at Work

**40 University Avenue
Akron, OH 44308**

www.livingfaithatwork.org

Faith Alive! at Work

Adult Faith Formation

Living Faith at Work

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Notes for the Session Coordinator

- *Within this planned session, there are a number of activities. In addition, there are several alternative activities made available in the pages after the planned session. The session coordinator and/or the team should feel free to choose among the planned and alternative activities. The point is to adapt the session to the particular needs of the group expected to participate in this session.*
- In preparation for the session, read over the session agenda and all the session elements and note the materials needed for the session. Obtain the materials and arrange them for use as planned in the session elements.
- Use your usual meeting place. If this includes a special space for prayer, use that for the opening and closing prayers for this session.
- We suggest allowing between 1½ and 2 hours for the session. This allows for some choice in what you include or remove from the session according to the needs of those anticipated to be participating.
- Some of the activities are presented here as small group (5 or 6 members) activities and others as whole group activities. If your participants number less than 9, treat all activities as whole group, adjusting as necessary for that situation.
- Where small groups are able to be utilized, try to separate the groups with enough space to avoid distractions caused by overhearing what is being said in the other groups.
- The timeframes given on the working agenda are all inclusive, that is, they include the time that must be allowed for moving the participants into and out of small groups and the various locations utilized for the sessions. The teaching-learning activities ought not be scheduled or allowed to run through all the allotted time in each segment. People, especially adults, will dawdle as they move between activities or locations—the greater the distance the more they are likely to dawdle.
- Determine who will be the Prayer Leader or person responsible for conducting the prayer services during the session. Give them the prayer

service materials in time to prepare for the planned rituals. The opening prayer is also provided in a one page, private reflection format for distribution to the participants, if so desired.

- For this session, it is important that the participants see work more broadly than as only a job for pay. As part of the introduction for the session, it would be helpful to make a few comments about what work is.

Very broadly Living Faith at Work defines work as any productive activity. This would include children whose work can be that of students and stay-at-home parents whose work is housekeeping and child rearing. It is also worthy of note that each person may function in several different jobs or work efforts in the course of a day. An adult might work-for-pay with an employer, work at home on house cleaning or yard maintenance, and work at parenting with his/her children. We humans also experience different work over our lifetimes from student, to employee, to parenting, and to grand-parenting and supporting our adult children and grandchildren in many, varied ways.

- The materials for the Introductory Learning Experience could easily take more than the allotted time. The presentation team should review the materials and prioritize the suggested activities. Then if the first activities undertaken take longer than planned, the lower priority activities can be cut to keep the session within the time allocation.
- For the Introductory Learning Experience, provide chart paper and markers for each group. Time the experience so that there is some feedback from the small groups to the larger group. Be sure to let the small group facilitator know that the facilitator's primary job is to see that everyone is encouraged to speak and share their thoughts. Remind the scribes that they are to copy down the speaker's words as exactly as possible. If it is necessary to paraphrase, they should ask the speaker to give the paraphrase.
- Allow more time for the Teaching Witness than for the Personal Witness as the Personal Witness tends to be shorter. Allow more time for the reflection activities than for the witness talks. Recommended times are 15-20 minutes for each of the two reflection sessions, 15 to 20 minutes for the teaching talk, and 8-10 minutes for the personal witness talk. Shorten the talks rather than the reflection time.
- An outline for the teaching witness, "A Christian Vision of Work," is included in the documents. The outline is not intended to be delivered in totality. Rather the person giving this talk should select the ideas and method of presentation that would best fit the needs of the anticipated

group. The preferred deliverer of this talk would be a priest or deacon of the parish. Alternatively, a pastoral minister who is not a cleric could give the talk. A DVD with a video of the teaching witness is available from Living Faith at Work.

- The Personal Witness talk is intended to be a sharing of one person's efforts at recognizing and living the Spiritual Path of Work. In the documents is a sheet with some ideas to help shape the presentation, but the key is the personal story of the speaker. A polished oration is not expected and probably would be less effective than the rougher texture of a personal, conversational sharing of the speaker's efforts and feelings.
- The givers of both talks are strongly encouraged to practice their talks in advance with a fellow team member offering feedback and suggestions for improvement in delivery and for keeping the talks within the time limits.
- When the reflection questions for the teaching and personal witness talks are given out, it is very important to give the participants time to reflect privately and even write out a few notes about their personal reflections before asking them to share their thoughts. The first sharing should be in a pairing of two or three people. Such a small group serves three purposes: (a) it is easier to try out one's ideas with just one or two other people than the full group, (b) it is harder to avoid sharing when there are only one or two others in the group, and (c) once a person shares an idea in a small group, the person is more likely to share it with a larger group.
- When bringing the entire group back together for the Sharing of Learning Reflections and Applications, lend some importance to the action by capturing the ideas in public writing.
 - We recommend having at least two writers, preferably three, equipped with markers (water based).
 - Space and equipment permitting, have chart paper ready on two or three stands and a writer/scribe next to each stand.
 - If space and/or equipment do not allow for chart paper on stands, tape chart paper sheets to the walls in two places (one place for Reflections/Learnings and another for Applications).
 - Prepare the writers/scribes in advance to capture the speakers own words in so far as possible. Avoid summarizing and/or paraphrasing.
 - Put headers on the chart paper sheets to clearly identify them as "Reflections & Learnings" and "Applications."

- As the session coordinator solicits statements of Reflections and Learnings, assign them to a writer/scribe in rotation. Do the same for the Applications when they are given.
 - Use no more than 10 minutes for capturing Reflections and Learnings, then move on to the Applications.
 - Be sure to give time for private consideration and jotting of notes about the application before soliciting ideas for capture on the chart paper.
 - Consider taking the last minute or two of time allotted for this activity to summarize briefly the Reflections and Learnings and the Applications.
 - Save the chart papers for posting in the meeting space for the next session.
- In dismissing the group at the conclusion of the final prayer, encourage the participants to share a greeting of peace and thanks with several of the people around them. Allow time after the session and before closing the facility for participants who wish to continue talking with each other.

Faith Alive! at Work

Agenda

15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Gathering and Opening Prayer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Registration & Hospitality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcoming statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Greetings b. Identify key people of the session's program B. Group Formation C. Opening Prayer Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move the people to the Prayer Space. 2. See separate file for the prayer "A Meditative Prayer" 3. At the conclusion of the prayer, have the participants return to the full group meeting space.
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> II. Introductory Learning Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. An Appreciation of Good Work
70 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> III. In-Depth Learning Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Teaching Presentation: A Christian Vision of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suggested outline/contents in separate file 2. Whole group presentation 3. Distribute reflection questions at the end of the talk while giving directions for reflecting. B. Reflection on Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal and private first 2. Shared in dyads within the small groups C. Witness Presentation: Spiritual Path of Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute reflection questions at the end of the talk while giving directions for reflecting. D. Reflection on Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal and private first 2. Shared in dyads within the small groups 3. Shared with entire small group

15 minutes	<p>IV. Sharing Learning Reflections & Applications</p> <p>A. Whole Group Sharing & Reflection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring the whole group back to together and invite them to share some of the reflections they gave or heard in the small groups. 2. Have several team members write the reflections on chart paper as they are given by group members. 3. Suggest having the at least three sheets of chart paper taped on to walls and one writer at each sheet taking turns writing the reflections. <p>B. Reflection—Application Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After about half the time is up or when reflections stop flowing, pose a new question for the entire group, “How can or will you apply the ideas brought forward today?” or “What commitment(s) are you willing to make about improving your relationship with Jesus Christ?” 2. Allow about 2 minutes for private consideration and note taking. 3. Solicit volunteers to state their responses to the question(s) and put them on chart paper as with the reflections. Do not attach names to the commitments.
5 minutes	<p>V. Closing Prayer Service</p> <p>A. See file for Closing Prayer Services</p>

Faith Alive!

Fundamental Purposes of the Faith Alive! Sessions

- To strengthen the **connection** between people's faith and work. (Work is defined as any productive activity we do.) [**Connection could be interpreted as interaction, interrelationship, and/or interdependence.**]
- To enhance parishes as formation centers which affirm, equip, challenge, and support believers in their daily life mission to live the gospel, especially at work

I. An examination of why our commonly understood Catholic Christian vision, at the grass roots level, needs further development for integrating faith and work.

A. Dualistic thinking

1. sacred vs. secular **or** spiritual vs. material [This issue has existed throughout human history. Today's materialistic culture makes the issue particularly relevant for Catholic Christians today.]
2. separating the divine from the human
3. misunderstanding the American concept of separation of church and state

B. Tendency to view spirituality as fundamentally an interior, contemplative experience.

C. Failure to take seriously one's own ordinary life events including work as a way of encountering the divine.

D. Too much emphasis upon mission and ministry being directly related to internal church work or parish commissioned responsibilities.

E. Lack of recognizing one's work as a possible "religious" vocation, an opportunity to strengthen the connections between God, oneself, and others.

- Again, Mission has a church. The church belongs to the mission. The church equates to “the people gathered.”
- “Call” equals desires, gifts, talent, interests, skills. All God given for one’s unique piece of the mission. We are stewards of what God has given—the call and the mission. The mission is born of us. The church is the vehicle.

II A realization we, as church, are forming people as disciples in the world. The Faith Alive! Retreat builds upon the foundation belief that together we can continue to strengthen our focus upon the vocation and mission of the laity in the world.

- A. Emphasis upon forming people for volunteer or paid "inner/ecclesial church life and work" needs to be extended to formation for daily life and work.
- B. Recognition that the average lay person would benefit from learning more about recent church teachings on the role of the laity in the world, the call of lay people to be Christian influences in the social, political, military, economic, educational, medical, cultural, etc., spheres of life
- C. Need to foster approaches in Christian formation that are life and work-centered, that foster faith-inspired reflection, decision-making, and action in the midst of the marketplace (we can infuse much of this into what is already going on in parish formation of people).
- D. An opportunity to encourage believers to find meaning, value, and creativity in their work, experiencing their labor as God-centered, as a vocation, as kingdom building, as responsible and honest stewardship.
- E. A call to lay people to further develop and deepen their own unique spirituality rooted in who they are and what they do, a stewardship of God’s gifts integrating personal growth and concern for the common good, grounded in scripture and Catholic Christian tradition.
- Integrating personal and social moral growth based on scripture and Catholic Church tradition.

Faith Alive! at Work

A MEDITATIVE PRAYER

Directions

Gather the participants in the space designated and decorated as the prayer space for the meeting.

Divide participants into 2 or 4 groups. If two groups, designate them “even numbers” and “odd numbers” for the reading of this meditative prayer. If the number of participants is small (less than 8), you could have them take turns, in round robin fashion, reading the phrases designated for groups to read.

Ask the groups/readers to pause for 3 to 4 seconds before reading each next line.

Ask the groups/readers to pause and reflect on the prior set of readings for 20 to 30 seconds at the major breaks between readings.

Alternatively, one reader may read each section slowly with pauses between the major sections.

My Work

Group 1: *God has created me to do Him some definite service;*

Group 2: *He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.*

Group 3: *I have my mission.*

Group 4: *I may never know it fully in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.*

Pause

Group 1: *I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.*

Group 2: *God has not created me for naught.*

Group 3: *I shall do good.*

Group 4: *I shall do His work.*

Group 1: *I shall be an angel of peace.*

Group 2: *I shall be a preacher of truth in my own place;*

Group 3: *I shall do this even while not intending it,*

Group 4: *if I do nothing but keep His Commandments.*

Pause

Group 1: *Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away.*

Group 2: *If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him;*

Group 3: *If I am in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him;*

Group 4: *if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.*

Group 1: *God lets nothing happen in vain.*

Group 2: *He knows what he is about.*

Group 3: *I may lose my friends; I may be thrown among strangers;*

Group 4: *I may feel desolate, or confused*

All: *—still God knows what He is about. Therefore I will trust Him.*

Pause

All: *God has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I shall do his work. I shall do good. Amen*

(An adaptation of Cardinal Newman's creed.)

Faith Alive! at Work

A MEDITATION

*God has created me to do Him some definite service;
He has committed some work to me which He has not committed
to another. I have my mission—I may never know it fully in
this life, but I shall be told it in the next.*

I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

God has not created me for naught. I shall do good.

*I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace,
a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it
—if I do but keep His Commandments.*

Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away.

*If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him;
in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him;
if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.*

God lets nothing happen in vain.

He knows what he is about

I may lose my friends; I may be thrown among strangers;

I may feel desolate, or confused—still

God knows what He is about. Therefore I will trust Him.

*God has committed some work to me which He has not committed
to another. I shall do his work. I shall do good. Amen*

(An adaptation of Cardinal Newman's creed.)

Faith Alive! at Work

Introductory Learning Experience

An Appreciation of Good Work

After the Opening Prayer, have the participants gather in their groups. Each group should have its own table with a large piece of chart paper on it. Alternatively, the chart paper can be mounted on stands or taped to flat walls with the group gathered around the paper.

If the group members do not know each other already, they should introduce themselves, giving their names and the type of work they do. Remind the participants that work is not limited to work-for-pay but includes any productive activity. For example, for children in school, school work is their work; for stay-at-home parents, homemaking is their work, for caregivers, attending to the physical and spiritual needs of a loved one is their work, for the infirm, being a patient, a recipient of services from others, is their work.

Each group should identify for itself:

- A moderator whose job it will be to be sure every member of the group is heard from on each question,
- A scribe whose job will be to write what each person says onto the chart paper, and
- A reporter who will share the group's ideas with the other groups.

The leader explains the process that will be used. The leader will give a question to all groups and all individuals in all groups will give their brief responses. The moderator makes sure everyone gets a chance to contribute and the scribe writes down the contributions. This will be repeated 2 or 3 times. Then the reporters will be asked to share their groups' responses with those present.

The first question: Picture the place where you work. Recognizing that most people, adults and children, work in several places, suggest that they pick the workplace in which they face their greatest challenges or the place in which they

feel they do their best work. Each person should have only one workplace in mind as they participate in this learning experience. Then ask the participants, “Picture those with whom you work. Picture the person with whom you would most like to work so that your work is the best in the place. Give two words that best describe that person.”

While the first question is being answered in the small groups, the leader should give each group one of the scripture quotations prepared for experience.

The second question: The moderator is to read the scripture verse given to your group. After reading the verse(s), give two words that would describe your workplace if that verse were believed and acted upon by you and your workmates.

The third question (to be used only if there is ample time—10 minutes or more—left for this segment of the evening): What would you do the same or differently if Jesus were the person telling you what work to do and how to do it?

Reporting out

If there are five or fewer groups, have the reporters read the statements from their groups to the entire audience.

If there are six or more groups, gather the groups into clusters of three or four groups and have the groups report to each other within the clusters.

Time permitting: Once the reporting out is over in the clusters, ask the participants to identify common ideas in what was reported out. Write those on chart paper for all to see.

Transition to the first talk.

Materials needed for the Learning for All Session

- Large sheets of chart paper
- Water based markers (one for each group)
- Copies of individual scripture verses sufficient for the number of groups. Copy the attached sheet and cut the verses apart, distributing one verse to each group.
- Tables for the groups or space and tripods or wall space for groups to gather around the chart paper.

Scripture Verses for Use with the Second Question

John 6:27

Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

1 Corinthians 12:4-5

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord

Philippians 2:14-15

Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world,

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance;

2 Timothy 2:15-17

Be eager to present yourself as acceptable to God, a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation. Avoid profane, idle talk, for such people will become more and more godless, and their teaching will spread like gangrene.

Faith Alive! at Work

A Christian Vision of Work

Outline of Ideas for the Teaching Witness

A note before beginning: This outline is not meant to be totally incorporated into the Teaching Witness talk. It contains many ideas from which the witness can choose those most appropriate for the expected participants and the witness. Leave time and space in the talk for personal touches. Be aware of the time limitation necessary for the session and limit the content to fit the time.

1. Work is defined as any productive activity we do.

- What feelings do many people often get when they think of work? (Ask for examples. Possibilities include: drudgery, effort, tired, frustration, what I have to do, etc.)
- If the participants show signs that they view work as only those activities done for pay, it would be helpful to spend a minute or two expanding the meaning of the word/concept “work.”
 - It is any productive activity we do, whether for pay or not. Examples include: studying, cleaning house, cooking, caring for another needing assistance.
 - We may work in several places in the course of a day—in school and at home, in the office and at home, at home and as a volunteer outside the home.
 - Over the course of our lives we may work in many capacities and many workplaces. As children, as young adults, as parents, as grandparents, and as patients.
- What feelings do people usually associate with spiritual experiences? (Ask for examples. Possibilities include: peace, joy, harmony, closeness, hope, strength, sense of meaning and purpose, etc.)

- Why the dichotomy between the two? Possible responses include:
 - The sacred/secular split in thinking,
 - The misunderstanding in our country of the relationship between church and state/between religion and public life/between work and spirituality.
 - A past emphasis within the church on spirituality as an experience apart from ordinary, busy, messy, sinful, daily living.
 - A sense among many that spiritual activities occur only within or initiated by faith communities.
 - A tendency to focus primarily upon internal institutional church activities and ministries, to the exclusion of recent church teachings which emphasize the fundamental mission of the laity is to contribute to the transformation of the world -- including the world of work.

2. Our Christian faith/spirituality at its foundation is a way of seeing, recognizing God's presence in all of life, including work.

3. If we view work through the lens of faith, what do we see?

- A call and a mission to partner with God in exercising dominion (not domination) over the earth, "to cultivate and care for it" (stewardship), *Genesis 1: 28 and 2: 15*.
- The fundamental call/vocation: to listen to God, to be our best selves, to be who God created us to be, we are called to be obedient to His direction.
- The fundamental mission: to use the gifts and attractions God gave us to make a positive difference in the world (to further the reign of God, to do God's will).
- A recognition that sin, a falling out of right relationship, alienates us from ourselves, from God, from one another, from our work, *Genesis 3*.
- A belief that all of salvation history, beginning with creation, is the story of God's redeeming love that becomes fully expressed in and through Jesus. All the dimensions of our lives, including work, are redeemed as we open up to God's loving, healing, reconciling presence.
- An experience of covenant as the foundation of relationships and work (contrasted with the notion of a contract). *Exodus*.
- A challenge by the prophets to be just in all our works.

- The example of Jesus seeing his primary work as doing the Father's will, that is, furthering the reign of God (God's loving and reconciling presence within humanity), *John 4:34* and *John 19:30*. Jesus as the servant leader, *John 13:3-15*.
- Jesus' call to his disciples to follow his example, to be good and honest stewards—to have a servant's heart, to be willing to sacrifice for what is right and just, for the good of others, *Matthew 25*. Implications for our inner attitudes, ethical decision-making, and outer actions in the world of work
- St. Paul's reminder that we ultimately work for the Lord, *Ephesians 6:7*, that we are part of one another as the Body of Christ, that we are ambassadors of reconciliation.
- Doing good work understood as a way of gratefully giving back to God, who has loved us first—not a way of winning God's approval.

4. Church teaching focusing on the spirituality of work was given full expression in an encyclical written by Pope John Paul II in 1981, *Laborem Exercens*.

- Considers the idea of a new civilization based upon the spirituality of work.
- Work is meaningful and just only when the human person's worth is fully valued, when the worker's dignity has priority over productivity.
- Economic profit is necessary and justifiable but never at the expense of human dignity.
- Work is meant to have a personal, family, and societal value.
- Human activity is an essential ingredient in the building of the earth and the reign of God
- Work is a means by which people can grow in union with God and participate in the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ, a specific way of dying to oneself and rising as a more God centered and other centered person.
- People of faith are called to exercise their spirituality within the context of their daily lives, including work.
- To live in God's presence at work with awareness, integrity, justice and love is the essence of the spiritual life.

- Work ought to be available to people in such a way that basic human rights and duties are protected and promoted—the call to justice in the world of work.
- Work is not only for private gain, work is an essential force to achieve the common good.
- Work has the potential to build community by uniting people into a powerful solidarity.
- Work is an opportunity to partner with God in bringing about "a new heaven and a new earth."

5. It makes a profound difference how we view our work: whether we look at our work only as a career or through the eyes of faith as even more—a vocation/calling

- Career emphasis:
 - Marketing one's own talents for personal gain.
 - Striving to get ahead.
 - Focus on oneself.
 - Virtues are often competition, power.
 - The ultimate goal—personal success.

- Vocation/Calling emphasis:
 - Using one's gifts to create a better world.
 - Making a difference through personal dedication.
 - Focus on community, common good.
 - Virtues are cooperation and servant leadership.
 - The ultimate goal—being faithful to God's loving will in contributing to humanity, to the reign of God.

Questions that will be used for Reflection and Dialogue

1. What spoke to me personally concerning this teaching on *the spirituality of work*?
2. Have I seen or could I see my work (activity) as a call, as spiritual?
Why or why not?
3. What if beginning this week I did my work with a conscious and consistent awareness of God's loving and guiding presence, how would this influence what I do, how I do it, why I do it?
4. How can I practically integrate this teaching more deeply into my overall spiritual awareness and my life at work?

Faith Alive! at Work

A CHRISTIAN VISION OF WORK

Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

1. What spoke to me personally concerning this teaching on *the spirituality of work*?
2. Have I seen or could I see my work (activity) as a call, as spiritual? Why or why not?
3. What if beginning this week I did my work with a conscious and consistent awareness of God's loving and guiding presence, how would this influence what I do, how I do it, why I do it?
4. How can I practically integrate this teaching more deeply into my overall spiritual awareness and my life at work?

Faith Alive! at Work

Spiritual Path of Work

Potential Starting Points for the Personal Witness

A note before beginning: These starting points are not meant to be totally incorporated into the Witness talk. They contain many ideas from which the witness can choose those that best tell the witness' personal story about growing in his/her spiritual life through his/her work life. Also, the witness is not limited to these prompts but can bring in similar ideas as appropriate. Be aware of the time limitation necessary for the session and limit the content to fit the time.

- My growing awareness that my work is a call and opportunity to cooperate with God in expressing my gifts to make a loving and just difference in the world.
- My responsibility is to become a leader, an influence, at work.
- My recognition that as a lay person I have not simply a job or a career but a vocation and a mission, that my ultimate employer is the Lord. How such a perspective on my work influences what I do, how I do it, and why I do it.
- Illustrate with examples of how I have been unaware of God at work in my work and become more conscious of his presence in a situation in hindsight. How has such a belated awareness helped me to be more aware of and cooperative with God in the moment?
- What spiritual disciplines do I practice at work or could I practice at work to be more *centered* in the Lord and more consciously *sent* to live gospel integrity and love.

Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

1. What was valuable in this witness for me to hear and reflect upon?
2. Why is it important for me to have a stronger sense of my work connecting with my faith?
3. How can I deepen my sense of purpose, my awareness of serving the Lord in my work?
4. What specific ways am I being called to foster greater integrity and caring at work?

Faith Alive! at Work

Closing Prayer

(In the meeting room at the space designated for prayer rituals)

Opening

Leader: O God, come to my assistance.

Response: Lord, make haste to help me.

All: Glory be to the Father....Amen.

Reading by one reader

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

A Litany for Living Faith at Work

Leader: Friends, let us offer our prayers to God, who created the world and all that is in it and saw that it was good, who sent his Son to live and work among us as part of his redemptive mission on earth, and who has called us to be good stewards of his creation and ambassadors of his reconciliation: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may see that our fundamental vocation as baptized Christians is to be our best selves at all times.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may see the reign of God as his loving and reconciling presence among humanity

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may be good stewards of our talents and gifts.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may see our work as a means to partner with God in exercising dominion over his earthly creation.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may live as viewing our work as an opportunity to partner with God in bringing about "a new heaven and a new earth."

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may live with an awareness of God's presence as we fulfill our responsibilities at work.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may live in God's presence at work acting with integrity to our faith's values.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may live in God's presence at work acting with justice for co-workers and those we serve.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may live in God's presence at work acting with love for those with whom we are in contact.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may find in our work ways to make our parts of the world a better place for those in it.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may have the grace to willingly sacrifice for what is right and just.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Leader: That we may see the ways in which we can be God's ambassadors of reconciliation as we work both inside or outside our homes.

All: Lord, touch my heart and strengthen my hands

Closing Prayer I

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Jesus, our brother, today we have considered our relationship with you and those with whom we work, and we thank you for this experience. As we go forward from this session, we have made stewardship commitments toward sharing the treasure of love and reconciliation you have given us. Help us keep these commitments so that your loving commitment may touch and act upon every aspect of our lives.

We ask this in your name. Amen.

Needed resources

- A Reader
- Bible or copy of 2 Corinthians 5:17-20
- Copies of *A Litany for Living Faith at Work*

Faith Alive! at Work

Materials list for this Session

For the Opening Prayers

- Copies of the Opening Prayer, “A Meditative Prayer,” for each participant.
- If individuals will be reading the various parts of the prayer rather than the group, identify them and be sure they are ready and willing.
- Optional: copies of “A Meditation” for the participants

For the Introductory Learning Experience

- Large sheets of chart paper
- Water based markers (one for each group)
- Copies of individual scripture verses sufficient for the number of groups. Copy the sheet attached at the end of the information about the Learning Experiences and cut the verses apart, distributing one verse to each group.
- Tables for the groups or space and tripods or wall space for groups to gather around the chart paper.

For the Teaching and Personal Witness talks: copies of the outlines and related information about the talks.

For the Reflections

Copies of the reflection questions
Pencils

For the Sharing of Learning Reflections

Chart paper (use Post-it chart paper or have masking tape available to tape the paper to the walls)
Markers (water based so they do not bleed through the chart paper)

For the Closing Prayer

- Bible marked for the reading.
- A Reader
- Copies of *A Litany for Living Faith at Work*

Potential Handouts for Further Exploration of Faith and Work

- The Living Faith at Work website flyer. The website is at <http://www.livingfaithatwork.org>.
- Include an abstract of the teaching talk, *A Christian Vision of Work*.

Faith Alive! at Work

ADDITIONAL OR ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Prepare a sheet with questions for an examination of the previous day's or week's work. Individuals in the groups could take a few minutes and think about responses to one or more of the questions and then all the members of the group could share their reflections. Questions could include:
 - What did you like about the past day's/week's work?
 - What gave you the greatest satisfaction at work over the past day/week?
 - When did you have an opportunity to promote reconciliation or healing in your workplace and what did you do?
 - How did you help a frustrated person get past their frustration?
 - How did you help to reduce stress in your workplace?
 - How did you treat the person in your workplace who most aggravated you this past day/week?
- Prepare a worksheet to help the participants to prepare for being God's ambassador to their workplaces. Individuals could take a few minutes and think about responses to one or more of the questions and then all the members of the group could share their plans. Questions could include:
 - Who is the most underappreciated person in your workplace? What honest compliment(s) could you give them over the next week?
 - What aspect of your work are you proudest of? Why are you proud of that? Pick one other aspect of your work. What could you do to make yourself prouder of that aspect?
 - What ethical or moral challenge do you expect to face in the next week? What would be the right thing to do? How do you plan to deal with this challenging situation?
 - What strife is going on in your workplace? What single, small step could you take toward healing that strife?

- How would you like your workplace to be different at the end of the next week or next month? Who can help you bring about your desired change? What obstacles would have to be overcome? What is your first step toward getting help? Toward overcoming the first obstacle?

Faith Alive! at Work

A Christian Vision of Work

Abstract

1. Work is defined as any productive activity we do.
2. Our Christian faith/spirituality at its foundation is a way of seeing, recognizing God's presence in all of life, including work.
3. If we view work through the lens of faith, what do we see? A call and a mission to partner with God in exercising dominion (not domination) over the earth, "to cultivate and care for it" (stewardship), *Genesis 1: 28 and 2: 15*.
4. Church teaching focusing on the spirituality of work was given full expression in an encyclical written by Pope John Paul II in 1981, *Laborem Exercens*.
 - Work is meant to have a personal, family, and societal value.
 - People of faith are called to exercise their spirituality within the context of their daily lives, including work.
5. It makes a profound difference how we view our work: whether we look at our work only as a career or through the eyes of faith as even more—a vocation/calling.

<http://www.livingfaithatwork.org>

The Living Faith at Work website [<http://www.livingfaithatwork.org>] contains more information, individual activities, and small group activities.

There you will find

- Materials for use by individuals. These may also be used in small groups as discussion starters.
- Materials for facilitators of small groups including some suggestions on facilitating small groups. Abstracts and reflection/discussion questions for several books related to living our faith in our daily lives are included.
- The Faith Alive! program in three formats: **Faith Alive! the Retreat*—a Friday-Saturday Retreat, **Faith Alive! for the Generations*—eight sessions designed for mixed age groups, and **Faith Alive! for Adult Faith Formation*—six sessions designed for use individually or in a series.
- A PowerPoint slide show about living your faith at work.
- A list of suggested readings.
- Homilies or homily notes for the Sundays before St. Joseph the Worker and Labor Day from the past several years.
- Information and Internet links related to Catholic Social Teachings.
- Contact information for Living Faith at Work.
- Internet links to a variety of websites that contain information, prayers, reflections, activities, and even more Internet links related to living a life faithful to the Catholic Faith.

<http://www.livingfaithatwork.org>