

Enthusiasm at Work at Work

The meaning of enthusiasm has changed over the years to mean an intense and usually overt passion for something. In origin the word came from two Greek words *en* (in) and *theos* (God) meaning “God within.” For much of its history as a word, enthusiasm was taken as a negative, somewhat akin to today’s connotations of “fanatic” and “extremist.” Yet, there was also some sense of being inspired by God, of expressing the inner relationship with God in one’s visible actions, in a sense letting God shine through. It is this sense or meaning of the word that I see as a faith-based value.

For this meaning to have presence in our lives, it is necessary to have an inner relationship with God, to be open, even inviting, to God’s presence within us. For enthusiasm to be at work in us and through us, we must be in regular contact with God—we call this “prayer.” Particularly important, I think, is the listening part of prayer. Mother Teresa once said, “The more we receive in our silent prayers, the more we have to share in our active lives. Silence gives us a new way of looking at everything. We need this silence in order to touch souls. The important thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and what He says through us.”

Taking silent prayer as the first step in putting enthusiasm to work at work, to me means creating moments during my work day to pray, silently. Take some recurring event of the workday and make it a reminder to take a moment—30-60 seconds—for a quick prayer and some reflection. For example, at the end of a regular task before starting the next one or at the end of a telephone call, made or received, or after a testy conversation. A quick prayer that I like is simply, “God loves me,” followed by silently centering myself around that thought. Often in the silence I get ideas (God talking to me?) about how to live with that truth in that part of my day.

Letting God shine through is the second step in putting enthusiasm to work at work. I don’t see enthusiasm as an act that is put on. Rather it is an outward expression of what we feel and believe about our relationship with God. If the personal emphasis in a relationship with God is love, then love that is received from God would be expressed in our relationships with others. This does not necessarily mean doing great things or making great sacrifices as acts of love. As Mother Teresa suggests, “Do small things with great love. It’s not how much we do, but how much we put in the doing; and it is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving. To God nothing is small; the moment we have given it to God, it becomes infinite.”

With my aging mother I am learning a new truth about living with love and enthusiasm. For almost 75 of her 90 years my mother was one who gave with love. She was the one who did for others. Now in her declining years her acts of love are in the acceptance of others doing for her. This is proving a much harder challenge for her than all of her years of giving. Yet, in it all, she still lets God’s love shine through.

If you find joy in your relationship with God, then let that joy shine in your eyes and demeanor in everything you do. If it is peace, then let that peace radiate from you. If it is mercy, be merciful to yourself and to all around you. Whatever you find in silent communion with God, channel it to the rest of us.

As Peter Scholtes wrote in the hymn, *They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*. That is enthusiasm, that is God’s love shining through us in our daily actions and interactions.

ENTHUSIASM — A Faith Based Value at Work

1. What does applying the faith-based value of enthusiasm in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of enthusiasm in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of enthusiasm in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based enthusiasm in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?