

# Spiritual Readings for the month of May 2021

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

## Saint Joseph the Worker

May 1 is the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker; Pope Pius XII instituted the feast in 1955. This feast extends the long relationship between Joseph and the cause of workers. Beginning in the Book of Genesis, the dignity of human work has long been celebrated as a participation in the creative work of God. By work, humankind both fulfills the command found in Genesis to care for the earth and to be productive in their labours.

Pope Francis dedicated this year to St. Joseph “A celebration of St. Joseph and a call to focus on his patronage is particularly relevant in this time of universal turmoil when so many are having difficulty finding employment, when we are becoming more aware of how much we owe to so many ordinary, hardworking people, and when our human frailty and mortality are so much in our minds and in the news. The Church reminds us that we have a powerful ally in Heaven who, having lived and worked so long in the shadows like so many unsung heroes.”

St. Joseph was an ordinary worker, a just man, who worked with his hands. The pandemic has brought those who are ‘ordinary workers’ to our attention and has rightly named them as the heroes who serve in spite of their own danger. Our Vincentian tradition has long encouraged the ordinary work of serving those most in need without any reward and without fear. Many people are suffering right now. Some are ill and others are unemployed and unable to manage their debts. Not all will manage to get through the pandemic without permanent, life altering damage. We must be praying for our neighbours in need and searching for any way we can bring love, respect, justice and joy in these troubled times.

## Reflection

- As Vincentians, how can we advocate for the dignity of human work?
- Share examples of how we can bring love, respect, justice and joy in these troubled times.

## Prayer for Workers:

Joseph, by the work of your hands and the sweat of your brow,  
you supported Jesus and Mary, and had the Son of God as your fellow worker.  
Teach me to work as you did, with patience and perseverance,  
for God and for those whom God has given me to support.  
Grant me to look upon work with the eyes of faith,  
so that I shall recognize in it my share in God’s own creative activity  
and in Christ’s work of our redemption, and so take pride in it.  
When it is pleasant and productive, remind me to give thanks to God for it.  
And when it is burdensome, teach me to offer it to God.  
*by Brian Moore, S.J.*

*Submitted by Vincentian, Sr. Yvonne Hoogeveen,  
York South PC President*

## **Dorothy Day** *as excerpted from My Life with the Saints by James Martin, SJ*

“After her death in 1980, Dorothy Day was (described by) the Catholic historian David O’Brien (as) the most influential, interesting, and significant figure in the history of American Catholicism, she was always uncomfortable with her legendary status... Don’t call me a saint, I don’t want to be dismissed that easily.”

On the one hand, Dorothy Day is a traditional brand of saint. She was someone who espoused voluntary poverty and proclaimed the necessity for peacemaking, as was Francis of Assisi. She was a person whose vocation was to work directly with the poor and alleviate their suffering, as was Mother Teresa. She was a woman whose life of prayer animated her good works, as was Therese of Lisieux. And, like the apostle Peter, she didn’t let her sinfulness stand in the way of her responding to the call of God. So she seems a very traditional saint ... but she is more likely a non-traditional one. Unlike many canonized saints, she combined her service to the poor with a slashing critique of the political and economic systems that give rise to contemporary poverty.

In retrospect, it’s clear that this was a natural outgrowth of her career as a journalist: she understood where money came from and where it went. She not only stood *with* the marginalized, but she stood *against* the systems that would keep them in the margins...she was the bearer of what (is) called a political kind of holiness, which makes even some devout Christians uncomfortable. It doesn’t make me uncomfortable at all. In her writing I find a realistic look at the world, and her comments on the plight of the poor are, sadly all too relevant today. She never professed a vow of poverty, yet she lived more simply than I ever have. Her witness is both goal and goad for me as a Jesuit. She says to me, “Do you really need to buy this? Do you really need one more possession in life? Wouldn’t this money better serve the poor?” *And “How is your work benefitting the poor? How are they in your prayers? How much do you love them?” (Emphasis on my mine)*

### **Reflection:**

- As Vincentians whose charism it is to advocate for and assist the poor, how do we identify with Dorothy Day?
- What about the questions that the author poses at the end, how do we as Vincentians answer them?
- In Matthew 26:11 Jesus said “For the poor you have always with you...” Consider this statement in light of the Author’s words that “her comments on the plight of the poor are, sadly all too relevant today”

*Submitted by Vincentian, Sr. Simone Patty  
Holy Redeemer, Durham PC*