

The Interior Life and Excessive Work

by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński

Daily work has as its aim not merely our purification from the guilt of sin, nor just atonement to God; it must also contribute in its own sphere to the formation of a certain knowledge, certain virtues in the soul, and certain values of the spiritual life. In a word, it is a question of a special asceticism of our daily work.

No external, physical, social, or educational work frees us from the need for spiritual work. The new duty, added to those that have gone before, cannot lessen the resources of our interior life.

The spiritual structure of our daily work is well illustrated in Christ's parable of the vine and the branches. In every shoot certain changes can be seen: there is growth, development, and the bearing of fruit. However, these external phenomena are the consequence of an inner process that takes place in the vine. All life is an interior process.

Similarly every activity has its interior process. The fruit of work is tangible externally (for example, the branch bearing its grapes) but the interior life of our work, that which comes from "the abundance of our heart" (cf. Matt. 12:34; Luke 6:45), cannot be apprehended by the senses. Yet this process of interior activity must exist, for without it our work will not produce any results.

Thus inner activity has its own laws in relation to external work, and one cannot afford to lose sight of these laws. The first of them is as follows.

Interior life is the basis of exterior life

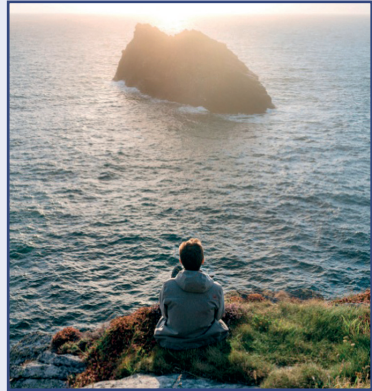


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Interior life is the basis of exterior life and of all physical, educational, social, and scientific work. The starting point for every kind of work ought to be the interior life, just as the branch comes forth from the life of the vine itself.

And here indeed one has to combine all the truths that create the Christian outlook on work. They must all be experienced by us, not only in relation to their inner depth, but also in relation to the meaning they hold for our work.

Thus we ought to have in our work a consciousness of God's sovereignty over every sort of work: of the fact that God is the beginning and the end of every action, and therefore also of external actions.

We ought to have Christ's redemptive work before our eyes, that activity that raises our external acts (even those that are purely temporal) to a spiritual level and gives them