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Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

AN EASY YOKE AND A LIGHT BURDEN

By Elisabeth Beall

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

*“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.*

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

MATTHEW 11:28-30

Reflection

As a dog person, I’ve often admired the canine work ethic. (That’s not to say that dogs don’t enjoy a good nap, of course.) Think of search-and-rescue dogs, therapy dogs, guide dogs, bomb-sniffing dogs: they have a task, they more than eagerly set about doing that task, and when they achieve the goal, the

excitement could scarcely be greater.

Our dog didn't have a formal career, but she set up her own tasks that she clearly saw as her job. Top of the list was Managing Security. She stationed herself in the upholstered chair at the picture window and watched for intruders, uppity outdoor cats, and other menaces. Once she spotted something that needed to be dealt with, she leaped up, barking as ferociously as a cocker-shih tzu mix could possibly bark, and clambered up the chair back in a passion. Front paws on one side of the chair back, rear paws on the other, she made it loudly clear that Trespassers Would Not Be Tolerated.

But all I had to do was say, "Good girl!" And she'd drop back on to the seat of the chair, panting, and wagging just as hard as she'd been barking the moment before. She'd done her duty, she'd been recognized as a Very Hard Worker, and – aside from the treat she had so obviously earned – there was nothing more she needed.

For people, work can be a more complicated issue. Pope Francis has said that "work is an essential part of human dignity" (*Amoris Laetitia*, no. 23). It is how we use the gifts God gave us; it is how we grow as individuals and how we enrich our lives. It is how we love the dear neighbor and care for creation.

Yet work can be wearying rather than enriching, depleting rather than nurturing. Jesus' invitation to work of a less burdensome variety is hope-filled and reassuring ... and yet it is no straightforward invitation. I ask myself: Was he really *serious*? Did Jesus – does Jesus – truly expect us to believe that living a Christian life is an easy task?

And that brings me back to the excellent role model of a working dog – and to the timeworn adage: "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." How much do we love our faith? How much do we want our lives to be an example of Christ's love for us all?

If we can focus on that desire to live out God's love on earth, then maybe we can follow that beautiful canine example and relish our work, give it every ounce of energy and dedication that we have, and look forward to another day beneath our easy yoke and light burden.



Therapy Dog Visiting Young Male Patient
Photo by Monkey Business Images

For Pondering

- What sort of work leaves you feeling weary and depleted? What sort of work leaves you feeling energized and joy-filled?
- Is living out your faith a light burden, or a heavy one? Spend some time reflecting on this question. Talk about it with God.

For Prayer

*God of all creation,
It was your work that created the world and everything in it,
including me.
Help me to follow your example in working to create and serve!
Show me your way to work, and guide me to rest
so that I may be refreshed to take up my work again.
Amen.*

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