

YEAR OF ST JOSEPH - MAY ST JOSEPH: “THE WORKERS’ SAINT”

1 May 1955. It was a Sunday and a crowd of workers filled St Peter’s Square. They were members of ACLI (Italian Association of Christians Workers), and many of them remembered their meeting with Pius XII ten years before on 13 March 1945, a month and a half before the end of the war that had profoundly wounded Italy. Now the country was experiencing immense growth, the “boom” was not far off.

But among the ranks of Italian Catholics, the Pope recognized those who were “disheartened”, those who complained about the lack of a Christian presence “in public life”, while socialist ideologies seemed to be taking over. Pius XII’s energetically recalled ACLI to their original identity so that they might be committed to “social peace”. In the end, completely shifting gears, he gave them a “gift” which surprised and enthused those present:

We are pleased to announce to you Our determination to establish -- and we in fact establish -- the liturgical feast of St Joseph the Worker, assigning to it the precise date of 1 May. Dear workers, are you happy about Our gift? We are certain that you are because the humble artisan of Nazareth not only personifies the dignity of the worker before God and the Holy Church, but he is also always the provident guardian of you and your families.

“Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen.”