

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

WORK AND PLAY

by the Rev. George de Charms

If someone should ask you, What is the difference between work and play, wouldn't you say that work is hard, and play is fun? Nobody likes to work, and everyone just naturally loves to play. As a matter of fact, you children would like to play all the time. You are not very happy if you have to stop your play in order to do the homework that the teacher has assigned you in school. You know that your parents and teachers love you and want you to be happy, and yet they don't want you to play all the time. They set aside times when you have to work. It is lots of fun to read stories about things that happened long ago, wonderful things about kings, and queens, and brave deeds that you would like to do yourself. It is fun to learn about wonderful places and people in far-away lands with their strange customs, their costumes, and their dances. But to do all of this you have to learn to read, and that is hard. It requires study and practice. You would like to play the piano, or a violin, or some other instrument in the orchestra, but before you can do so you must work hard practicing for hours and hours. The Lord loves everybody in the whole world, and yet He has created the world in such a way that everyone has to work all of his life in order to earn a living. Why is that?

The real reason is that when one is at play he usually thinks only of himself and pays little attention to others. And yet, the true happiness the Lord wishes us to have is possible only when we forget about ourselves alone, and think of how we can help make others happy. This is something we have to learn if we are to know the happiness of the angels who are in heaven, and the only way in which we can learn it is by doing some work.

Children love to play at doing the things they see grown-up people do. They love to pretend that they are flying an airplane, or driving a fire truck, or sailing a ship. They cannot really do these things because they are not big enough and they don't know how. One learns only by means of work. One has to read, and study, and practice—often for many years before one can really do the things they only pretend to do when they are children.

Fathers and mothers do many things for you while you are growing up. They give you a home in which to live, they give you food to eat, clothing to wear, a bed to sleep in, and toys to play with. You could not do any of these things for yourself. Yet for the most part, you take all of these things for granted and think very little about them. Although you do not see Him, the Lord does thousands of things for you every day. Unless He did so, you could not possibly live, yet very often you do not even remember to thank Him.

It is fun to have pets to play with, a dog who will romp and bark, and chase a ball; a rabbit to cuddle, or perhaps even a horse to ride. But if you have such a pet, you have to take care of it. It needs a doghouse, or a pen, or a stable to live in. These have to be built. They have to be kept clean. Any pet must be fed and given water to drink or it will die. This is work you do not like to

do, and you often forget and let the animal suffer if you are not constantly reminded by someone to take care of it.

Thousands of people whom you never see are working every day to provide the things you need. Farmers grow the grain, and bakers make the bread, and others package it and bring it to the market. Others raise herds of cattle and sheep to provide the meat and milk you need so you can enjoy delicious meals. Others make the automobiles, the trains, and the ships in which you travel. They all have learned to do these things by hard work. The only way you can really thank these people is by learning to do something for them in return when you grow up. For this you need knowledges and skills that can only be acquired by work. It would seem, then, as if you would have to do things all of your life that you do not like to do. How can you be happy? The truth is that when you have learned to do something well, when you have become skillful, the thing you have learned to do is no longer hard. It is easy. It is fun. You enjoy it just as you used to enjoy your play, and this brings the greatest happiness of all. You forget about yourself, and take great delight in providing for others the things that they could not get for themselves. You perform a use with love to the Lord, and gratitude to all those who have blessed you with so many things that you could not have enjoyed without them.

In so doing, you serve the Lord and truly thank Him for all His benefits. In this, you will find untold joy, and you will go on in the spiritual world serving the Lord and the angels with ever-increasing happiness in heaven forever. This is the happiness the Lord wills to impart—the happiness that can be achieved only by work. That is why you must begin, even while you are children, to learn how to work, to sacrifice your own pleasure in order to bring happiness to others. If you do, the Lord will return that happiness to you a thousandfold.