HOW FIVE STAR POINTS 
INTERPRET THE DIGNITY 
OF LABOR

This address has been prepared to help the Presiding Officer emphasise the practical nature of the lessons of our Order. This article establishes each Star Point's contribution to our understanding of how labor is dignified. The Presiding Officer may wish to make the presentation herself or she may wish to ask a competent fellow member to make the address.

While the selection is suitable for delivery throughout the year it might have special appropriateness for an evening on which all of the Star Points are being given particular recognition. In this case, the Presiding Officer might like to plan a very simple ceremony following the address by having the Star Points deliver the verse appropriate to the particular station. The verses are located at the end of the address. The verses may be included as part of the Presiding Officer's concluding remark. They may also be omitted without detracting from the address.

Presiding Officer will appreciate the "different" approach to the lessons to be learned from the Star Points and will enjoy having the five different aspects incorporated into a single, meaningful whole.

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One of the most practical and the most necessary things that our work teaches us lies in the understanding that there is "Dignity in Labor." The strange thing about this is that nearly everyone admits to the truth of this statement but the attitudes and actions of most of us seem to indicate that we do not really believe it!

WITHIN THE HOME

If you feel skeptical about this consider for a few minutes how the individual reacts. The ordinary person, perhaps cleaning out the basement, the garage, or some one of the many disagreeable and mussy household tasks necessary if a well-run, clean home is to be maintained, is interrupted in the course of this activity by the jangling of the doorbell.

The individual responds to the insistent tingling of the bell to discover that it is not a door to door salemian. It is not the milk man, the breadman nor the cleaner. It is not a survey taker nor the annual census interviewer. Instead, it is an unexpected caller of some particular import to the individual who now stares befuddled and confused behind the mask of dirt and grime deposited by his labor. By this time, any lofty notions of the dignity of labor have long since departed from the householder's mind and the individual escorts his untimely visitor into the midst of work, embarrassed, apologetic, and humiliated.
WITHIN THE BUSINESS WORLD

This problem of dignity and labor is certainly not confined to the narrow sphere of the home. To the contrary. Consider the hustling business executive, surrounded by a sea of reports, tormented with the constant buzzing of his phone, who labors amidst his confusion, his suit coat hanging on the back of his chair and his tie comfortably loosened to ease his tension.

What happens to his feelings about the dignity of labor when his highest superior or his most important client breezes into his office and surveys the scene with aloof serenity? Chances are the laboring business man reaches for his suit coat, adjusts his tie to a properly strangling position, and then pats his papers this way and that hoping frantically that they will magically arrange themselves.

What he is trying to do is greet his visitor and pretend at the same time that he was really not laboring as hard as it appeared he was.

DIGNITARIES

Everybody who is engaged in any worthwhile activity is also involved in drudgery. But, to each in his separate capacity, drudgery and labor come in their own particular form. Honored and revered as is the President of the United States, still for him there is the labor of unending paper work, the tremendous strain of greeting long lines of visitors with pleasantries and handshakes, and countless other duties at which he labors as part of the overall job of being the President.

THE "ABOUT FACE"

What is it, then, that happens to our ideas about the dignity of labor when we actually are involved in the labor itself? Or, more particularly, what happens when we are actually "caught in the act of dignified labor"? Suddenly, it is we, ourselves, who render our understanding of this, one of our Order's finest teachings, completely ineffective.

It is we who do the about face and start believing that the labor is not dignified. What we prefer to do is to pretend or indicate that all of our accomplishments are achieved without our personal involvement in any labor at all. Actually, this is a ridiculous little game that many of us play in which we try to perpetrate the hoax that there is no labor connected with accomplishment and success.

RITUALISTIC TEACHINGS HELP

How can the ritualistic teachings of our Order help us to a more mature, reasonable, and practical application of the lesson that Labor is Dignified? To begin with it might be worthwhile to re-examine our lessons to see if our heroines were involved in the exhaustive labors that we ourselves encounter every day. Probably the first lesson that comes to mind is that of Ruth.
RUTH

Ruth was doing plain, ordinary, and very hard common labor in the fields of grain. There is no question but that gleaning was an arduous task and one which we ourselves would certainly go to considerable pains to avoid. It is not hard to imagine the hard-working Ruth, warm and perspiring under the blazing mid-day sun. It is not difficult to understand that she was doubtless covered with the particles of soil that clung to her garments and her hands as she picked up the stalks of grain. One can well imagine how rough and sore were her hands from the constant contact with the hard fibres.

But, when she met the wealthy, admired Boaz, Ruth was not ashamed of the effect that her labors had had upon her appearance. There is no record of Ruth's apologizing for being encountered while in the process of laboring.

Herein lies the mystery and magic of Ruth. Ruth herself considered the hard labor in which she was involved dignified, fitting and becoming because it was a necessary part of the task she had assumed to be her rightful duty. She had determined to care for her beloved Naomi no matter what disagreeable task followed as a consequence. Ruth brought dignity to her labors through her own sense of pride in her work and through her own conviction that what she was doing was altogether right and commendable.

How did Boaz respond to the picture of the hard-working Ruth? Was it beneath his dignity to regard an individual involved in menial labor with respect and consideration? Indeed not. The worthy Boaz was able to discern the great spiritual quality that was the essence of Ruth's personality and in his eyes her magnificent efforts enhanced her worth. In the eyes of God, the sterling, upright Ruth emerged as the suitable beginning of the House of David and ultimately of that of Jesus Christ.

MARTHA

Next, it is apparent that Martha has something to teach us about the Dignity of Labor. Poor Martha, harassed by the constant succession of tasks necessary to maintaining the family household and their own particular way of life, felt as so many of us often do. She longed for relief from long hours of drudgery. In Martha's case, she felt that Mary might very well assume some portion of the household duties. Perhaps it was that Martha felt that if she were relieved from some of these duties that she might be free to engage in some other more worthwhile tasks.

Martha's miserable frame of mind might well be explained in the fact that Martha had lost sight of the worth and dignity of her own labors. For a short time, it seemed to her that some other use of her time might be more rewarding and desirable. Christ, however, brought comfort to Martha, and those of us who study her stories may also find comfort and satisfaction.

For each individual who undertakes the labors demanded of him by his own particular life situation, there is dignity and compensation. Indeed the constant spiritual progress of the human family would be hopelessly quagmired were it not for the loving, conscientious labors of countless individuals doing the tasks that are theirs to do.
ESTHER

Some of you may wonder about Esther. Did Esther contribute anything to our understanding of the Dignity of Labor? In twentieth century terms, we might consider Esther a Personnel Director of some proportions. To manage a household of the size and magnificence of the Persian palace was not an easy task. Just directing the staff of servants required to maintain such an establishment is in itself a demanding job.

We have evidence to support our belief that Esther was intimately acquainted with the functioning of her fantastically large household. It was she, herself, who directed the procurement of the king's preferred foods and arranged the details of the famed banquets that were so instrumental in the exposing of Haman and his treachery.

In addition to this, Esther was dedicated to the task of fortifying her own soul or spiritual self. Those of us who have undergone the long hours of anguish necessary to the evolvement of our own moral and spiritual course of action, can appreciate the grueling intellectual and spiritual labors that were Esther's during the agonizing hours of her three days of fasting and prayer. The individual can engage in no labor more tasking than that of refining his own spirit. And, like Esther, the individual can find nothing more rewarding than the results of his molding his motives into their proper moral form.

Esther challenges us to bring the dignity of our labors not only to the physical world about us but to bring it also to the spiritual world that shapes human destinations.

ADAH

Even the child-like Adah contributes to our mastery of this concept. Adah knew that what she needed to help her with her problem was a closer relationship with her Maker. She needed time to pray. Young as she was, Adah realized that she must make an effort to secure the atmosphere and surroundings essential to her own spiritual welfare. Adah, could not achieve a sense of oneness with God amid the confusions of her everyday surroundings.

If you recall the story, Jephthah, Adah's father, had just returned in the company of the gallant and victorious army. It is doubtful that Jephthah had made his personal anguish and sorrow the subject of conjecture among his subordinates and the army as a whole. Doubtless, the men were engaged in joyous celebration of their victory. Unquestionably, the populace as a whole was jubilantly celebrating their relief from oppression. Probably the tragedy of Jephthah's household was confined to the sphere of their immediate family and friends in the hours immediately following his return. However, when the vow was finally fulfilled with the sacrifice of the famous leader's daughter, everyone was well aware of the tragedy.

But Adah was very certain that she could not accomplish her objective of a confident spirit in the face of death while she was still in the midst of the general community turmoil. She also knew that just wishing that things were different would not help. In order to find communion with her God, Adah undertook the laborious task of climbing a mountain to a refuge of silence among the loveliness of nature, untouched, unspoiled.
Adah shows us that nothing dignifies the human being more surely than his sense of unity with God and that nothing could be more dignified than the labor involved in achieving this enviable state.

ELECTA

Finally, we should consider the enormity of Electa's contribution. You may say that you do not recall that Electa labored at anything. But this is just an idea one might acquire if they listen to only the words of the story and miss all the ideas that defy expression on the printed page.

Imagine yourself in circumstances, today, that are similar to those that Electa had. Now, suppose your home were to have a constantly open door. Suppose that any and all who passed your way might enter confident that they would be fed and sheltered. And suppose, that to each who came you gave of yourself through trying to teach them about the wonderful message that Christ had brought to the world. Suppose you tried to teach each and all in an understandable way what was meant by Eternal Life through Belief In Him Who Died to Save the World.

Would this be labor?

In the Story of Electa, we find a supreme example of one who labored in the fields of men's hearts and minds to sow there the seeds of Faith, Hope, and Brotherly Love. Can you imagine the fatigue of trying to speak to each in terms of his own capacity to understand? Can you imagine the heartbreak and disappointment that must have been hers when she encountered a stubborn heart or an unwilling mind?

Physical labor? No. But labor, nevertheless, Electa's labor on behalf of the spiritual welfare of her fellow man has made her story live with dignity and with grace through all the intervening years since her horrifying death so long ago.

CONCLUSION

Truly, one of our Order's finest teachings lies in its promulgation of the truth that there is dignity in labor. But, each of our lessons also teaches us that we bring the dignity to our labors when we value our efforts as an integral part of the duty that is ours during the course of our lifetimes.

Let us turn to nature's world of wonder
   As did Adah on the mountain so long ago.
Let us feel the soft warmness of rain,
   Marvel at the miracle of shimmering snow.

Let us labor in our own fields of grain
   That nothing of value is buried in the soil.
Let us rise from the tasks that befall us
   With real satisfaction that comes from toil.
Let us not place honor and life's glory
    Before life's duty, its most challenging task.
Let us never become so enthralled with honor
    That we cannot be humble, for God's help ask.

Let us face life's sorrow and bereavement
    With staunch Faith in Christ's Word and Way.
Let us live each incomplete day on earth
    Confident in completion on the Last Day.

Let us not be found weary and faint hearted
    When all about us renounce and deny.
Let us not be bowed down with mortal censure
    But await judgment from His Court on high.