

Reflection for the 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

This coming Monday, September 1, 2025, is “Labor Day” in the United States of America and in Canada. This Holiday honors the American labor movement and the contributions that workers have made to the development, growth, endurance, strength, security, prosperity, productivity, laws, sustainability, persistence, structure, and well-being of the United States of America. With this recent election of Pope Leo XIV, there has been a renewed interest in the encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII titled *Rerum Novarum, Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*. This encyclical was published on May 15, 1891, and it addresses the relationship and mutual duties between capital and labor, as well as government and its citizens. Pope Leo XIII saw challenges in his day and felt they needed to be addressed. In the last hundred years much has been done to address the need for a living wage and a safe working environment. With the changing nature of work and where work takes place this might be a time to reflect on other things that might need to be addressed between capital and labor.

In 1887, Oregon became the first state in the United States to make “Labor Day” an official public holiday. By the time that this holiday became an official Federal Holiday in the year 1894, 30 states were already officially celebrating Labor Day. Today the “Labor Day” holiday can be seen as the unofficial end of Summer, because it marks the end of the cultural Summer season. Traditionally Fall activities, such as school and sports, begin around the time of the Labor Day holiday. Of course, this year here in Los Alamos County, school started three weeks ago.

Growing up, my family tended to take an end of the Summer camping trip on the Labor Day weekend in the Jemez Mountains. This camping trip to the Jemez Mountains always reminded me that the Summer was over and it was time to focus on another school year. Of course, the Labor Day Holiday is meant to be more than a reminder that summer is over, and Autumn has arrived. This Holiday was created to remind us that our nation was built by men and women, who toiled in factories and in the fields, and that the success that we have as a nation today is because of those who helped to build up our nation. These men and women, who worked in the factories and the fields, were trying to provide for their children’s current needs but were also trying to provide a better future for their children, our nation and the world.

The readings this Sunday, on the 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, are taken from the Book of Sirach, the 68th Psalm, Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews and the Gospel according to Luke. All these readings this Sunday have a strong message and reminder that we as followers of the one true God are called to be humble servants of God. Our first reading this Sunday is taken from the Book of Sirach, which was written by the son of Eleazar in the year 180 B.C. In this first reading we have the author of the book stating, “*My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.*” This message of humility is echoed throughout all the readings this Sunday. We can think of the men and women who toiled in the field and on the factory floor. They went to work day after day not looking for recognition, but to provide for their families and make a difference in our country and our world.

It is fitting on this Labor Day weekend that the message that we are given in our Sunday readings is one of humility. For this Holiday is focused on the humble and selfless gift that has been given to our country by the men and women that have done so much to build up our country. Their work, in the fields, factories, military service, in the classrooms, boardrooms, churches and in the public square, has been done in a humble and self-giving manner that has transformed our nation and the world. On this Labor Day weekend may we as a people and as individuals be thankful to all those who have labored to build up our nation and in the process built a better world, trusting in the guidance of our loving God.