Dear Parishioners,

Labor Day is celebrated differently than any other national holiday because it is different in nature. It is not dedicated to war heroes or to one remarkable person, or to the birth of our nation, but to all who work or labor. Labor Day was not always a holiday. It began as more of a demonstration to provide a holiday that celebrated the worker and their contribution to society. It was first celebrated in New York in 1884 and was part of the beginning of labor unions and the organization of workers to ensure that their basic rights would be protected, including a just wage, safe working conditions, and the fair treatment of workers.

On this Sunday before Labor Day, we have an opportunity to reflect on what the Church teaches us about the dignity of work and the rights of workers. Catholic social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of today’s world. I invite you to take the time to watch the video series presented by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services on the internet: WeAreSaltandLight.org/cst101.

In the Catholic tradition, work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continued participation in God’s creative action. St. Pope John Paul II said, workers “want to share in the responsibility and creativity of the very work process. Work is a gift to be appreciated, not a burden to escape. You are a steward of the talents God gave you, and you’ve been entrusted to use them to their fullest.” We experience this when we feel pride or satisfaction through the work we have done well.

The work that God entrusts to us — whether paid or volunteer, inside or outside the home, part-time or full-time, a career or a job — is sacred and worthy of attention and respect. How we labor every day matters, and how we are treated and treat others in our work is an essential concern of Christians. In the workplace, if we are owners, managers or supervisors, we can help ensure that our businesses and organizations are offering family wages and the dignity-affirming benefits that our Catholic tradition teaches should be available to all.

Let us pray for one another,
Fr. Jerry