

September 4, 2016
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Let your face shine upon your servant, Lord, and teach us your ways”
Labor Day is a tribute to the work of the body. It is also a tribute to the work of the soul.

Labor Day

Labor Day came out of a mighty struggle to establish minimal protections for the working people of this country. It was a struggle for the forty hour week, for health and safety regulations, for the right of collective bargaining, for social security old age pensions, for worker’s compensation for injury on the job, for unemployment compensation, and for a minimum wage.

It cost blood in Hazelton, Pennsylvania, in 1897. 19 unarmed miners were shot down when they went on strike. Out of this came the United Mineworkers Union. During the Pullman Railroad Strike in 1894, President Grover Cleveland called out 20,000 troops to put it down. They shot 13 unarmed men and wounded 57, and the courts condemned not the killers, but the striker’s leader, Eugene Victor Debs. Following the deaths of these workers, the U.S. Congress unanimously voted to make Labor Day a national holiday.

Labor Day is a tribute to the work of the body

Catholic teaching about what workers should receive for their work is clear. Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, says, *“Today's economic and political forces have led to increasingly lowered economic prospects for Americans without access to higher education, which is having a direct impact on family health and stability.”*

“Linking the decline in good jobs to family woes, Wenski said, ‘over half of parents between the ages of 26 and 31 now have children outside of a marriage, and research shows a major factor is the lack of middle-skill jobs -- careers which can sustain a family above the poverty line without a college degree. Divorce rates and the rate of single-parent households break down along similar educational and economic lines,’ he continued. ‘Financial concerns and breakdowns in family life can lead to a sense of hopelessness and despair.”

Wenski quoted from Pope Francis' address to Congress during the pope's U.S. visit last September: *"We live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. Yet this same culture presents others with so many options*

that they too are dissuaded from starting a family." Wenski said, *"When our leaders ought to be calling us toward a vision of the common good that lifts the human spirit and seeks to soothe our tendencies toward fear, we find our insecurities being exploited as a means to further partisan agendas. Our leaders must never use anxiety as a means to manipulate persons in desperate situations, or to pit one group of persons against another for political gain.*

"Simply put, we must advocate for jobs and wages that truly provide a dignified life for individuals and their families, and for working conditions that are safe and allow for a full flourishing of life outside of the workplace," he added.

Labor Day is also a tribute to the work of the soul

Some give so much of themselves in their work. I received an email yesterday from Michelle and Tony Vinceguerra who are members of this parish. It was about a killing in Haiti. Tony is a dentist who frequently goes to Haiti to teach dentists there how to make inserts for children who are born cleft palate. They also do this in Peru, India and elsewhere.

Michelle wrote, *"Hi Fr. Larry, Really sad news this am. A missionary was killed who had been with the two sisters we work with in Haiti. They all work tirelessly for the poor and Sr. Nazareth and Sr. Rose were in Port au Prince picking up rice sent by the Irish for Jean Rebel and had just been with this Sister. Anthony just talked to Sr. Nazareth and they are all devastated! They are all members of The Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary and they could have been in the car with her. So, so sad.*

"Please ask our parish family to pray for the Sisters and the people of Haiti. We know our parish family will remember Sr. Rose and Sr. Nazareth from our presentation about the goat project and their generous support of it and the people of Haiti. Sr. Sola was a colleague of theirs and a good friend and will be missed by everyone. Keep them and the people of Haiti in your prayers! Love, Michelle and Tony"

This is an article from a local newspaper about this murder titled, *"Spanish missionary who devoted life to poor killed in Haiti."* It reads, *"A missionary from Spain, Isabel Sola Matas, 51, who devoted her life to helping the poor in Haiti, was fatally shot at a crowded intersection in the Caribbean country's capital Friday. Her purse was stolen after assailants shot her twice in the chest as she sat at the wheel of her SUV.*

"Sola was a tireless servant of God who helped build houses, worked as a nurse, fed the hungry and created a workshop where prosthetic limbs were made for amputees injured in Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake. 'The loss is immense. In

killing her they didn't kill just one person, they killed the hopes of many people,'
local Fr. Alexandre said.

“One Haitian woman outside Sola's home shouted in distress and anger when she heard about the killing. ‘What a country this is! She did so very much for people here and this is what happens.’ Sola was a member of the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, a group of women from various countries who commit themselves to serving others. By her home's metal gate, a disheveled man in tattered clothes stared at the ground. ‘She was the person who took care of people like me, helping with food and other things,’ he said. ‘I am very sad today’. Sola gave everything she had to the people in Haiti. Labor Day for her was a work of the soul.

What is this saying to you?

I invite you who hear these words to reflect on what struck you as you listened, and to ask yourselves, “Lord, what are you trying to tell me in this?”

*Labor Day is a tribute to the work of our bodies.
May it also be a tribute to the work of our souls.*

**Lord, we need to hear this. Let your face shine upon your servants and teach us
your ways**