

By Pat Haggerty

It used to be that Labor Day marked a transition for most of us. It was the beginning of the school year and the official end of summer. These days, schools start at various times during the end of August and the beginning of September. Labor Day is still a guidepost for the end of summer activities and the projection of cooler days in the fall. Most families have their end of summer cook-outs on Labor Day and their final summer festivities on that day. My Labor Day consisted of a visit to a local Country Fair and a family cook-out on the lake. It was both fun and bittersweet knowing that leisure times were over and schedules and routines would take their place.

Labor Day became a federal holiday over 120 years ago. It was introduced as a day of celebration for laborers and was initiated by the labor unions of that time. It has been celebrated in various manners since then.

When I think of “labor” or work, I think of all those working in jobs that they love and all those working in jobs they hate, but that they need, to support themselves and their families. I think of all of our young people who are looking forward to jobs and careers. I think of all those retirees who have put in countless years of hard work and now get to relax a bit. I think of those people in third world countries working for pennies a day and not being given a just wage.

When I think of “labor,” I also think of the passage from Matthew: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;

for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Mt 11:28-30)

How often do we pray for workers? For those who help us in and through their jobs? Do we pray for our healthcare workers, our teachers, our bankers, our lawyers, our car mechanics, our farmers, our postal workers? When was the last time you prayed for the clerk at the supermarket who helped you find an item for your favorite recipe? It may sound simple and beyond the scope of our prayers. It isn't. Everyone needs prayers---and they need our prayers.