

Labor Day: We Need One Another to Survive

A reflection from Brian Wigger, Pastoral Associate

In the Walt Disney movie, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, seven short men invite Snow White into their everyday world with the words, “Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho. It’s off to work we go!” A song about work by those who do work invites us to look at the spirituality of work.

Each year, the first Monday in September is set aside as a national holiday to celebrate the hard work of citizens across the U.S. Along with providing many employees with a three-day weekend to wrap up the summer season, it’s also a time to recognize the contributions of workers, both past and present.

Recognizing Labor Day isn’t new. In fact, the observation began in the late 1800s after New York labor unions hosted a parade to honor their employees. The idea took root and President Grover Cleveland eventually signed a law officially designating Labor Day as a federal holiday in 1894.

Cities across the U.S. participated by hosting their own parades, picnics and gatherings to mark the occasion. 130 years later, the tradition still continues today.

Labor Day makes me mindful of our interconnectedness; we need one another in order to survive. This is what we celebrate on Labor Day – the work of human hands. A holiday that recognizes the contributions of all those who labor for the benefit of the common good. Labor Day offers us the occasion to remember that God is not finished with creation nor is God finished with our being created.

Even that simple can of corn you pull from the grocery store shelf has thousands of people standing behind it: from those who stock the shelves to the truckers who transport the product to the store; from the regional warehouse workers to the rail operators who supply the warehouse; from the farmers and harvesters to the granary workers.

Then there are others such as those who supply fertilizers that aid in growth and those who developed innumerable agricultural technologies over the years. People also labored to build the roads and rails over which the products travel. Others supply fuel for

the trucks, combines, and locomotives. Coal miners work hard to supply the electricity needed all along the way. Still others in banking and business take risks and supply the funds to run agricultural, transportation, and food distribution businesses and networks.

The list of people who have worked so that you and I can buy that can of corn at the store is almost endless.

Thanks be to God for human labor; we help each other to survive!

Let us pray and hope that we never look at a can of corn the same way again.