

JOSEPH, THE WORKER'S SAINT...

This Monday we celebrate "Labor Day." Unofficially it marks the end of the Summer season. That went by fast didn't it? Seems like it was just Memorial Day a few minutes ago. Labor Day is a time for a barbecue, a last trip to the beach perhaps and for the kids to enjoy the final hours of freedom before school begins. But it really does have another meaning.

"Labor Day," always commemorated on the first Monday of September, was initiated by the workers of this country way back in 1882 to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions that workers have made to the well being, prosperity and up-building of our society here in the United States. Perhaps, the beginning of September is a good time to celebrate the day as many people do start back to work at this time-teachers are one good example!

On Labor Day, we stop to reflect a little on all those who must earn their "bread" each day by working. Work is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege, because many people in our society are unemployed and that is a tragedy. Not everybody can work that wants to work.

Work is a responsibility too, because whatever one's vocation and position in life, it should be well done. In fact, the work that we do can truly be considered as our "vocation," even if we do not consider it as such at times. The Second Vatican Council reminds us: "When men and women provide for themselves and their families, they can rightly consider their activity as a prolongation of the work of the creator and as contributing to the fulfillment of the divine plan." (Constitution of the Church in the modern world).

Those words really present a very exalted view of human labor. Yet, when we reflect on it, if more people did consider their jobs as a real "calling" and as an extension of God's own work in the world, they would certainly do better at it! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was not ashamed to be known as the "Son of a laboring man." Saint Matthew's Gospel tells us that when our Lord went back to teach in His hometown of Nazareth, the people scoffed at Him saying, "Isn't that the Carpenter's Son?" the Son of the living God Himself was not ashamed to be called a working man's child!

Of course, the carpenter himself was Saint Joseph who is known as the Patron Saint of Workers. As a carpenter, Joseph just probably eked out a meagre existence. He certainly did not make a lot of money! When Jesus grew old enough, He helped His father at his trade. Thus as Pope John Paul II put it so beautifully, "Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the redemption."

Every year on May 1st, the church celebrates the Feast of "Saint Joseph the Worker"

to emphasize that this saint is a special friend to all who work for a living. In fact, Saint Joseph is known as the "Patron Saint of Workers." If we find our job difficult or having some problems with our work, why not consider praying to Saint Joseph who is a very strong advocate and intercessor?

On this Labor Day weekend, let us pray for all those who work for a living. We pray that the great Saint Joseph, the silent carpenter of Nazareth will shower his blessings down upon them!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jerome