

Dear Friends,

Recently my friend, Msgr. Bob Hoffman, retired from St. John Neumann Parish in St. Charles. At one point he decided to change the salutation of his bulletin letters from “Dear Parishioners” to “Dear Friends.” I like this idea. Yes, you are parishioners and I am your pastor and that is an important relationship, one to which I choose to dedicate my life each and every day. While I would never want to diminish the sanctity of the “Pastor–Parishioner” relationship, I cannot help but see the divisions caused by the roles we play in this parish.

“Dear Parishioners” has a top–down tone. However, “Dear Friends” seems to imply the notion that we are all in this thing called Church together and the roles we play as Church are essential. All that said, I look out at the gathered assembly at Mass and I realize that you are, indeed, my friends. So, from now on the salutation of my bulletin letters will be, “Dear Friends.”

There is something bittersweet about the Labor Day Holiday. The summer has come to an end, children are back in school and the pace of our lives speeds up this time of year. Still, it is good for us to celebrate our labor and the many ways the works we do enhance the quality of our lives.

However, it is so important that our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of the Utah coal mine that caved in earlier this month trapping six miners inside that mountain and killing three others in their rescue effort. This tragedy calls for a greater sense of solidarity among us as a nation. People risk their lives by going to work each day. This is as true for those who work in police and fire departments as it is for those who work on Wall Street or LaSalle Street, for migrant workers, for doctors and nurses and people on construction sites. Those who work in the military take the highest risks of all. All fields of labor bring about profound risks and incredible sacrifices as well as the benefits of salaries,

pensions, insurance and most of all the fulfillment of hard work to make a positive difference in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

We live in a great nation; one that is founded on the values of human faith, integrity and friendship. Perhaps this Labor Day we can truly celebrate these values which unite us. I hope and pray this will be a very joyful, safe, relaxing and peaceful Labor Day for you and your families.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel