



LABOR DAY

August 31, 2025

WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

Labor Day signals the end of the summer season, and also offers to many a long weekend, including barbecues and family gatherings. This holiday also reminds me of one of the greatest blessings we enjoy but can easily be taken for granted. I realize that because it is something that is not known in our twin parish, Holy Trinity. That blessing is leisure. A day-off, weekends, vacations, going out for dinner are all part of our culture. We look forward to them and they are a part of our normal lives. In fact, we see an ever-growing demand for leisure, coupled with a lessening commitment to work!

There is certainly nothing wrong with that. I enjoy all those things. It's just that having recently returned from Uganda I realize that this is something that many are not able to enjoy. My point is not to feel guilty that we can experience leisure, but to help us to be more grateful for this blessing.

One of the facts of life when I visit Father Vincent is that we are almost never able to keep to a planned schedule. Many times, the daily itinerary calls for us to go to a sub-parish at a particular time, only to be told that we have to wait a few hours. Why? Many survive by farming, and when it rains, they have to dig to grow crops. Our plans have to wait. Their work to survive comes first. Similarly, Father Vincent never has a "day off." Every day he is doing something for the parish. Of course, he's not literally working twenty-four hours, seven days a week, but he hardly gets any break in his work. That's part of life in Uganda, but it is also a reflection of his commitment to his priestly ministry and care for his people.

Even in the school, the students start early and have classes till late afternoon. In the evening, while they still have light, they have chores to do and then homework. On weekends, the students have work to do around the dorms and school grounds. In the bush, many times after school, the children will have to walk to get water. Around the rectory where I stay, there are always people doing something. They are washing floors, cleaning or doing laundry, by hand. Many times, someone will come up to me and ask if they can do my laundry. I feel guilty for letting them do it, but they expect to do it and want to do it. Cooking is an all-day affair. It is done by fire, so they have to constantly tend the fire, which includes making sure there is fire wood. Since there are no stoves, it takes longer to cook. After eating, then there is the washing of the dishes. There are no dishwashers, so it is all done by hand. I remember what we had to do when my family went camping. We had to heat up water, put soap in a pan, wash the dishes, then put them into another pan with hot water to rinse, then dry. However, that was just for a weekend camping trip or just a week. This is every day.

This is just a fact of life in poorer countries, like Uganda. They have to work hard to survive and they don't have access to many of the conveniences that are a normal part of our lives. That includes appliances, of course, but also even more basic blessings that we know like electricity and running water.

I know many can think about their childhood, or recall stories of parents and grandparents who didn't have many of the modern advances that we enjoy. Fortunately, we have made great progress and have come a long way. With you, I pray that others, like the people of Holy Trinity will also experience a similar improvement. In the meantime, your continued generosity and support does help make their lives so much better. Your willingness to share your blessings is a blessing for others.

I wish everyone a wonderful Labor Day. Let us be truly grateful for the blessings we have and will enjoy this weekend. May we never take them for granted.

"I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance of being in need. I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me." (Philippians 4:12-13)