



Labor Day is always observed on the first Monday in September, occurring on September first this year. Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century.

In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to eke out a basic living. Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as 5 or 6 toiled in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages. People of all ages, particularly the very poor and recent immigrants, often faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks.

As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture as the wellspring of American employment, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th century, grew more prominent and vocal. They began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay.

Many of these events turned violent during this period, including the infamous Haymarket Riot of 1886, in which several Chicago policemen and workers were killed. Others gave rise to longstanding traditions: On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, the first Labor Day parade in U.S. history.

The idea of a "workingmen's holiday," caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives.

On June 26th, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide. To break the Pullman strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers.

In the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. On June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed it into law. More than a century later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified. Many credit Peter J. McGuire, cofounder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday.

Labor Day is still celebrated in cities and towns across the United States with parties, street parades, athletic events, barbecues, fireworks displays and other public gatherings, especially over the long Labor Day weekend. For many Americans, particularly children and young adults, it represents the end of the summer and the start of the back-to-school season.

The Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968, signed into law on June 28, 1968, changed several holidays to ensure they would always be observed on Mondays so federal employees could have more three-day weekends. There isn't a single, universal "theme" for the US Labor Day holiday in 2025, as it doesn't have an official theme like International Labour Day (May 1st). However, some sources mention themes like "Safety and Health of Workers" or "Social Justice and Decent Work" for the international observance, while general US party themes include an "End of Summer" or a "Red, White, and Blue" celebration.

Pope Leo XIV has united his voice to the Latin and Greek Orthodox Patriarchs' joint appeal for an end to the war in Gaza and for humanitarian aid to flow freely into the enclave.

The Latin and Greek Orthodox Patriarchs of Jerusalem released a joint appeal for peace in Gaza on Tuesday, August 26, saying there is no reason to justify “the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians.” On Wednesday, Pope Leo XIV joined his voice to theirs and recalled the Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace, which took place on Friday, August 22.

“Today I renew a strong appeal both to the parties involved and to the international community, that an end be put to the conflict in the Holy Land, which has caused so much terror, destruction, and death,” said the Pope. He also called for the safe entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and the protection of civilians.

“I appeal for all hostages to be freed, a permanent ceasefire to be reached, the safe entry of humanitarian aid to be facilitated, and humanitarian law to be fully respected—especially the obligation to protect civilians and the prohibitions against collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of force, and the forced displacement of populations,” he added.

The Pope concluded his appeal by invoking the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for peace. “Let us implore Mary, Queen of Peace, source of consolation and of hope,” said Pope Leo. “May her intercession obtain reconciliation and peace in that land so dear to us all.”

In their appeal, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem said the cycle of violence must end and the common good must be prioritized. “There has been enough devastation, in the territories and in people’s lives,” they said. “There is no reason to justify keeping civilians as prisoners and hostages in dramatic conditions. It is now time for the healing of the long-suffering families on all sides.”

The Patriarchs prayed that hearts may be converted, “so that we may walk in the paths of justice and life, for Gaza and the whole Holy Land.”

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch, and Patriarch Theophilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, made a pastoral visit to Gaza in late July, following an Israeli strike on the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City, which killed three people and injured several others.

In their joint statement, the Patriarchs recalled that the Catholic parish and St. Porphyrius Orthodox Church have sheltered hundreds of civilians since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, 2023. “We do not know exactly what will happen on the ground, not only for our community, but for the entire population,” said the Patriarchs. “We can only repeat what we have already said: There can be no future based on captivity, displacement of Palestinians or revenge.”