



Like the Rings of a Tree

FR. JOSEPH JUKNIALIS

For some, going to confession can bring a sense of relief—as if the slate has now been wiped clean; as if we have gotten a do-over with life or the past has been left behind as though it never happened. Our past, however, is always with us—the good and the bad, the joys and the sadness, the grace and the sin. There are no do-overs. We carry with us the marks of our lives simply because every experience, every kindness and cruelty, every moment of generosity and selfishness, all have made us into who are. We are much like a tree that adds a ring to its trunk each year. The ring always bears the marks of that year, whether it has been a year of rain or drought, whether insects have attacked, or whether Mother Nature has been kind. The tree always remembers and carries with it forever the rings of what life has been.

Our lives are the same. The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector tells this tale. Like the Pharisee, we have much good in our lives. We too have prayed and have been generous. We have been kind and honest and cared for the poor. We have tried to be faithful. The Pharisee's downfall was that he forgot about his sinfulness; he forgot he needed God's mercy. The tax collector, on the other hand, remembered his failings. Both were in need of God's love. Only the tax collector seemed to realize it. ●

Reflect

***How has my life been a mixture
of sin and grace?***

[Jesus said,] “Everyone who
exalts himself will be humbled,
and the one who humbles himself
will be exalted.”

LUKE 18:14



Dear Padre,

Is it wrong for children to dress up as zombies and devils and other evil creatures for Halloween?

No. It is perfectly acceptable to choose these kinds of costumes and to participate in the festivities of Halloween. Halloween is primarily a secular celebration. Although it is true that the original celebration is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, that tradition is more properly celebrated during the great feast days of the Church that follow Halloween: All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

Mythological representations, and the costumes that remind us of these kind of characters, are to be understood with a sense of fun and mischief. There is no difference between a ghost, a goblin, a zombie, Captain America, Superman, or one of the Mario Brothers. They are all fictional characters in the very human stories we share with each other. The meaning we assign to them must be proportional to what they represent. On Halloween, they represent nothing more than a person in costume. It could be an entirely different story under different circumstances in which there might be the possibility of a misunderstanding about the meaning of such a costume. Halloween pretty much blurs that distinction and takes away the misunderstanding. It is meant to be entertaining and fun. That is all. ●

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org



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A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants, who in turn chose to emigrate. All of us, in the course of our lives, can find ourselves healthy or sick, employed or unemployed, living in our native land or in a foreign country, yet our dignity always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God.

AUDIENCE OF THE HOLY FATHER, ROME, MAY 16, 2025



STEFANO SPAZIANI

Monday

October 27

Weekday

Rom 8:12–17

Lk 13:10–17

Tuesday

October 28

Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles

Eph 2:19–22

Lk 6:12–16

Wednesday

October 29

Weekday

Rom 8:26–30

Lk 13:22–30

Thursday

October 30

Weekday

Rom 8:31b–39

Lk 13:31–35

Friday

October 31

Weekday

Rom 9:1–5

Lk 14:1–6

Saturday

November 1

All Saints

Rv 7:2–4, 9–14

1 Jn 3:1–3

Mt 5:1–12a

Sunday

November 2

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day)

Wis 3:1–9

Rom 5:5–11 or Rom 6:3–9

Jn 6:37–40

(These readings or any from no. 668 or from the Masses for the Dead)