

SATURDAY OF THE THIRTIETH WEEK IN OT      Halloween      October 31, 2020

There is no single saint assigned to this date. Probably, because tomorrow is the Solemn Feast of All Saints, all those, canonized or not canonized, who are now in heaven, that is, in eternal bliss, as we say, with the Trinity, with Mary and with all the saints of every time and place -- forever and ever.

Today, however, is Halloween, which in the past century, especially in the United States, has become one of the most popular celebrations for young and old alike. You all probably know where the name of this celebration comes from. "Hallow" is an Old English word for HOLY, such as in the Our Father, where we pray HALLOWED BE THY NAME. EEN, it is said, is the shortened Scottish word for "evening." So, Halloween is the evening before the feast of the "Holy Ones." In its cultural, as distinct from its religious origins, and in its customs and practices as found today, it is complex and multicultural and increasingly secular. One of the most recent innovations has been "trunk or treat", first introduced by Evangelical Congregations in the Midwest as a way to seek to safeguard children wandering in often dark streets going from one stranger's house to another stranger's house, seeking candy with the threat to do some mischief [tricks] if the treat [candy] is not forthcoming. Somewhat ironically, other Pentecostal Congregations have spoken out against Halloween customs, claiming that this celebration was pagan or even demonic in its origins. This Halloween of 2020 will be a truly "spooky" one, as Covid-19 fears put a damper on what for many children was an activity and an evening they so looked forward to.

And let us adults not forget that it was on this date, 503 years ago, on October 31, in 1517 in Wittenberg, Germany, that Doctor Martin Luther, Augustinian monk, priest and theology professor posted his 95 Theses, generally considered to be the beginning of what we today term the "Protestant Reformation." Or as Catholics sometimes say, the "Protestant Revolt." I have twice prayed, most recently three years ago, at Martin Luther's grave in Saxony and the church door on which the "95 Theses" or his "objections to Catholic practices of that time" were posted. Perhaps you have heard of the "Three D's Dipping Down to Despair." Maybe you

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have experienced them; maybe you know someone who is spiraling down with them right now. What are these three “D’s”? The first is quite often serious **DISCOURAGEMENT** with something about our self or others or something happening in our life or our relationships. This discouragement often leaves us with **DOUBT**, even in regard to God or matters of Faith. This doubt frequently in turn produces psychological **DEPRESSION**. And these three D’s often result in our **DESPAIR**.

Why mention these on this day? Simply because St. Paul in our First Reading gives us one of the best aids to anyone slowly or quickly descending or dipping towards any manner of despair. It is one of the most strengthening and affirming passages in Paul’s writings. He writes: **CHRIST IS BEING PROCLAIMED AND IN THAT I REJOICE, FOR I KNOW THAT THIS WILL RESULT IN DELIVERANCE FOR ME THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT FROM THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRST.**

In our Gospel today, and on other occasions found in the Gospels, when a prominent Pharisee invites Jesus to a banquet at his home, at which, St. Luke remarks, the other guests are observing Jesus “carefully”, Jesus takes the opportunity to remind them through a parable of the importance and the rewards of humility. Jesus doesn’t hesitate to point out strongly to his host and to the other guests that: **EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED. BUT THE ONE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.**

Finally, may all the saints, whether canonized or not, beloved relatives of ours and friends, rejoice heartily these November days, beginning with this evening, and may they ever assist us to join them in heaven. Then one day November First will become our Solemn Feast Day as well -- both yours and mine!

