

I have always enjoyed Halloween and seeing all the different costumes and masks. Daniel, our director of music, dressed his pug as Darth Vader – he even breathed like him.

If you want to really experience Halloween, go to Hanover Street – it is Halloween on steroids. On All Saints we have people who know who the really are vs. Halloween – pretending to be someone else.

Our theme for today is hypocrisy. Originally hypocrite was another word for an actor or stage player. An actor might be the closest meaning to being a hypocrite, playing something they are not.

I always get a kick out of it when they interview actors, perhaps who play southerners, and then they speak you hear a British accent. You'd have to say they are pretty good actors not to pick this up.

+I once read about this guy robbing banks wearing this synthetic mask that was like scary real looking. They arrested someone who looked like the masked figure –as they didn't know it was a mask. Well, eventually they figured it out and caught the masked bank robber. (The mother of the falsely arrested son even admitted that the mask looked like her son.)

That kind of mask gets us a little closer to what it means to be hypocrite. The bank robber was pretending to be someone else. A hypocrite can hide people from seeing who the real guy is behind the mask.

The Old Testament Malachi and Jesus both speak challenging words to those leaders who have been pretenders. These leaders were given a sacred trust. Instead they put on costumes of importance and prestige instead of serving others, they demanded service from others.

The problem with the Pharisees wasn't their interpretation of the Law of which they were dedicated. The Lord says, "Do everything they tell you," but cautions, "Do not follow their example." They taught more truth than they actually lived.

+The Queen Mary was the largest ship to cross the oceans when it was launched in 1936. Through four decades and a world war she served until she was retired, anchored as a floating hotel and museum in Long Beach, California.

During the conversion her three massive smokestacks were taken off to be scraped down and repainted. But on the dock, they crumbled.

Nothing was left of the 3/4 –inch steel plate from which the stacks had been formed. All that remained were more than thirty coats of paint that had been applied over the years. The steel had rusted away.

That is why Jesus sometimes referred to the Pharisees as “whitewashed tombs,” because they had no substance, only an exterior appearance – hypocrisy.

Being a hypocrite is hard work. I say this because hypocrisy is harder to practice than almost any other vice. You can speak evil of your neighbors for 1/2 hour a day, you can be a glutton for an hour or two, but you have to be a hypocrite all day long.

Has it any redeeming features? Yes, one. If you want to be cured, that is very easily done. It is cured by the mere acknowledgement of it. If you say, “I have a terrible temper,” that won’t cure you of your temper; but if you say, “I’m a hypocrite,” you’re no longer a hypocrite. (A real hypocrite would never say, “I’m a hypocrite.”) Conversely if I say, “I’m humble!” Well....

So, with the Pharisees you have the classic example of hypocrisy – people who do not practice what they preach – people who say one thing and do another.

But there is another type of hypocrisy that is even worse. This is when people not only do not practice what they preach, but don’t believe what they preach. Do we need many examples?

Politicians saying one thing and then hear what others want and they change with the prevailing winds. There was one who was supposedly prolife until his mistress got pregnant and he tried to pressure into getting an abortion. These are liars and the worse type of people.

It is a pride that wants accolade, the title, without integrity. It wants first place without honor. It says things they don’t believe or honor.

There is another reality that some people call hypocrisy, but it really isn’t. This refers not to people who don’t practice what they preach. It refers to a kind of grey area, a kind of in-between. This person keeps up appearances, says the prayers, goes to Mass, not to deceive but to search and ultimately hope.

Maybe sometimes you struggle coming here. You pray and pray, and it seems God is silent. Am I doing something wrong? What am I doing here? Some are so full of faith, so happy, but I struggle. “Lord”, I commit the same sins over and over again. Should I even be here? I feel like a hypocrite!”

Guess what? You are not a hypocrite, because we do not come here because we are saints. You don’t have to be a saint to attend church! I’m living proof! ++As one joke goes, “I don’t go to church because there are a bunch of hypocrites there.” And the response? “What’s one more.”

It is not hypocritical, because it is a struggle with our faith and our own sinfulness. Two reasons we should be here!

Do you remember Simeon? For thirty years he came to the Temple every day looking for the Messiah and who for thirty years went away disappointed.

But despite this, he kept coming, hoping. That's why eventually got to look into the face of the Messiah, cradle him in his arms, and sing his great song of thanksgiving:

For him one day it all came together. As it will for you like him. We are not hypocrites. You are faithful in your search, struggling with your sins.

Not for you will Christ shout out "Hypocrites! Because you say one thing and feel another. No, for his words will be, "Come on in. Don't give up, we can work it out."