

**The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John  
Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ,  
October 31, 2021**

**NOT PRETEND**

This Sunday is Halloween. It is customary for children to dress up in costumes and pretend to be all kinds of things. And, all in all, it's pretty harmless for children to *pretend* to be something they're not: A superhero. A ghost. A princess. A vampire. It's when *adults* pretend – and not just on Halloween, but *every day* – that's when we enter some very dangerous territory.

Regrettably, today in the Church we are still living in crisis - *And all because some of my brother priests have worn their Roman collars as a costume.* Pretending to be something they're not. Pretending to preach God's Word – and then refusing to practice what they preach. Pretending – not just for one day, like our nation's children will do tomorrow – but pretending *every day*, laying heavy burdens on others and refusing to lend a hand in lightening that burden.

A dear friend and devoted priest delivered these words in a homily 19 years ago and after mass was questioned by a young boy: "Father, how do I know if you're one of the good priests, or not?" That question

has scarred his priesthood and has affected mine. But not as much as how the actions of "some priests" have scarred so many people's lives, and have scarred the whole Church. *How do you know if I'm one of the good priests?* There's only one way: Do I practice what I preach? Do I lay heavy burdens on you in my sermons, or do I try to draw you into friendship with God? Do I teach the truth? Hold me to those standards.

The green chasuble I wear during this Mass is no costume. And I'm not pretending. I need your prayers. Please pray for your priests!

Father John Carlos