

On Halloween this year several of my coworkers arrived at the office dressed in costumes. They wanted to know where mine was. So I grabbed the only thing I could find, a white tuxedo top hat, and tennis shoes, and went about my parish duties. When I arrived at the hospital, some people stared, some people laughed, but most tried to ignore me. One woman, though, tried to interpret the costume I had on and asked me if she had guessed correctly. "Are you a magician?" she asked. To be honest, I wasn't anything in particular, I was just wearing a tux.

It was dangerous for Jesus to heal. It's clear he had genuine compassion for people in their sorrow. It's clear he had complete power over nature, power not just to heal the sick but even to bring the dead back to life again. It's clear he wanted to use that power out of his compassion, but it was dangerous to do so. It was dangerous because some people misunderstood what was his profession. They thought he was a magician.

And sometimes we still misunderstand that about Christ. We've heard he can perform miracles, so we come to him with the ones we need done. On All Souls Day we recall the most tragic needs we ever brought to Jesus. We recall the dying of people we love; we recall asking Jesus the magician to cure them. We recall their death, and the hole their death leaves inside us.

St. Paul would have us recall rather that death has no victory. Jesus has conquered death and we shall all be raised.

If Jesus' profession was magician, bringing the dead back to life would be enough. But in the ministry of Jesus, his miracles were signs to us about the real power inside him. They are signs that no other power can stop him. Death is shadowboxing. The real miracle about Jesus is not that he can heal the sick, not that he can bring the dead back to life. The real miracle is that he can bring the dead into eternal life.

Our prayers for the dying do not go ignored. They are answered by the resurrection. The power of Jesus goes unchecked. He will hear our prayers and grant life to those we love. He is not a magician. He is God.