

OCTOBER 2022

EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

THE MAGAZINE

Does God Celebrate **HALLOWEEN?**

Remembering that evil and death
are *no match* for Him



The Value of a
Stay-at-home Mom



When All Other
Lights Go Out



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Humble Mendicant

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ETP: The Magazine

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Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project. He is the chair of the religion department at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and son.

THE MISSION *AND* A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Mission:

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if practicing Catholics, and fallen away Catholics alike, encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

We are a Catholic magazine that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island.

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we will always rely on the best Catholic designers (StartUpCatholic) so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out to me via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission!

Editor's Note:

This issue contains a nice variety of spiritual and practical takeaways: from the way that The Lord of the Rings can guide us through difficult times to the wild stories of St. Francis and all the way to the power of evil on Halloween. This month's issue also highlights the beautiful witness of a stay-at-home mom's journey and how it has brought her to see just how close God is throughout the ordinary.

Hopefully, you'll see how The Empty Tomb Project desires to ground the faith in one's experience so that these words can propel us forth to further center our lives on Jesus Christ. Each article will draw out an important perspective of being Catholic today while always returning to the fact that we can meet our risen God today, both vividly and powerfully.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.

MAJOR HEADLINE:

Does God Celebrate *Halloween*?

Pumpkins, jack o'lanterns, skulls, and spiders mixed in with some screams, fake blood and tales of witches. What do we make of Halloween as Christians and where did the popular celebration come from? More importantly, is God a fan of Halloween?

The term was coined from the phrase, "All Hallow's Eve" marking the day before the Catholic Church's celebration of All Saints Day on November 1st. The roots of the day go back to a Celtic feast named Samhain which marked the beginning of the harvest season. Celts are the ancestors of the Irish who lived roughly 2,000 years ago. They believed that this day marked the end of one year and the beginning of another. From this day forward the days began to get colder and darker.

On the brink of the darkness, Celts believed that the boundary between the world of the dead and the world of the living was faded. Ghosts of the dead were rumored to appear on this one night out of the year. In order to scare off these spirits, the Celts would wear masks in order to protect themselves.

Over time, the day took on more features such as trick-or-treating and American culture monetized the celebration with movies, costumes and so much more. Halloween is often a day for children to get together with their friends, be kids and eat some candy.

What is interesting about the feast, is that for most of the year our culture tells us that invisible realities are not important and that the only things that are real are what you can see with your own eyes. While many movies and vocabulary surrounding this day are playful and childish, the culture knows, deep down, that the topics of death, God and the after life are on their minds. The after life awaits us all and the question that haunts every person is vividly clear: what happens to us when we die?

Famously, it is said that most people would rather be the person laying in the coffin than the one giving the eulogy. At funerals, we often make small talk about weather and sports and weekend plans rather than confronting the topic of death. On Halloween, most people think that it is cute that their kids dress up in costumes with blood or as the grim reaper. These things are fine and it is nice to have traditions that revolve around celebration and community. The crux of our discussion here, however, is do we ever stop and actually think about death and evil?

In medieval times, many academics and even some saints would place skulls on their desks as reminders that one day they too would leave this earth. Practices abound across history and cultures that involve human beings coming to terms with their own death so that they can live better lives. Perhaps, Halloween can serve this purpose for Catholics. Maybe it can help remind us of the truth of invisible realities and of the belief in life after death despite this fallen world.

We firmly believe in invisible realities: angels, demons, spirits, etc. For many reasons, but notably because Jesus is God and Jesus spoke about angels and drove demons out of real people. If he is God then it is impossible for him to have told a lie or taught something that was incorrect.

continued on next page



Jesus said in reference to taking care of children: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father,” (Matthew 18:10). This passage creates one of the foundations for belief in Guardian Angels. We also know that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the news that she would become the Mother of God (Luke 1:26).

Jesus drives out many, many demons from people during his public ministry (Ex: Mark 1:21-28; Luke 8:26-39; Matthew 12:22-32). In fact, Jesus comes to earth to destroy the power of Satan’s grip on human souls. He is called the deceiver for many reasons, and the Devil’s greatest lie (which he convinces people of everyday) is that he is not real. That is what he wants us to think.

Maybe this is why Jesus drives out demons so many times and why he references Satan with such clarity during his teachings and ministry. These can be unpopular topics and passages to focus on, but that does not mean that they are irrelevant. Here, we must note that toying with the evil one through Halloween would be one of the dangerous aspects of this day. Christ comes to destroy evil so we should never take its power lightly. If the power of death could have been destroyed easily, then Jesus would have never been born.

God probably does not dress up in costume like so many will this month, but He can always use a celebration which is so attached to one of the greatest feast days of the year (All Saints Day) to bring about some true good. In the midst of the fun, candy and screams let us remember that the cross and resurrection stand in the background victorious.

Let us always remember: God is real. Jesus is God. Jesus died for you and he rose from the dead to destroy the power of evil. Life after death is real and the offer to us is to live in a perfect relationship with God forever.

The saints made this truth run through the fabric of all that they were. Let us weave it through the fabric of our souls, and our costumes as well.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.

The Value of a Stay-at-Home Mom

By Carly Chirchirillo

“When I grow up, I want to be a Mom.” This was almost always my response when a teacher asked what I wanted to be when I was older. When it came time for college, I knew I couldn't study motherhood, so I decided to look for a career with experience and a schedule that would help me on my journey towards and through motherhood. That led me to begin my nursing career. My nursing career has had wonderful ups and devastating downs, but I have felt truly called to my work in the hospital these past six years.

Last year when my husband and I found out we were expecting our daughter, we discussed what my work schedule would look like after her birth. I didn't think I was ready to stay home so we decided that I was going to look for a part-time night shift position. That way one of us would always be there for her and I would not have to miss most of her hours awake during the day. We knew it would likely be a challenge, but with God's grace we would do our best. To me, this plan sounded perfect, until I held my baby for the first time. I thought, “How am I going to leave my baby and go back to work at all?” Everyone told me that it would be hard, but I would adjust as every working mom does. It was a lesson that I am grateful I didn't have to learn, because God had a different plan. When my maternity leave ended, due to unforeseen circumstances, I was not able to return to my job. Much earlier in my motherhood journey than anticipated, I found myself with the new title, “Stay-at-home-Mom.”

A part of me was elated that I would be able to spend every day with my precious daughter and not have to worry about being tired from or stressed about balancing work and home life. However, there were three main fears that scared me about being a stay-at-home-mom (SAHM). What were other people going to think of me? How were we going to afford to live on one income? Was I going to go crazy not having a “purpose” outside of my home? These may sound fleeting to some, but I do not think I am the only mom with these fears.

For the first few months of adjusting to the SAHM role, when someone would ask what I did for a living, I would respond almost embarrassingly, “Oh, just a stay at home mom,” and I would quickly add, “But, I free-lance on the side!” Why did I feel like I had to defend my situation? Childhood Carly would say, “You did it! You are what you always wanted to be!” Well then why did I feel like I was doing something wrong?

There has been a great push in our society for women to contribute to the workforce and economy. It is wonderful that women have the ability to attend school, earn degrees, and enter the workplace. I am so grateful for my career and the opportunity to make an income from the education I received. We as a society, though, go too far when we make a woman feel guilty for staying home and taking that time she would have spent at work and spending it at home with her children instead. As Catholics, we have an amazing guiding light in our lives that we can look to for guidance and wisdom on our motherhood journey. All moms, and parents, are called to help mold holiness in their children and help create little saints for the Kingdom of Heaven. This does not look the same for every mom. For me and my family, God has made it evident that at this time, His will for me is to be home with my daughter. While I had some struggles with this idea, I have found the most peace in trusting that God is working things together for my and my family's good. He has provided for us financially. He has shown me that I need to look to Him to find purpose, rather than looking for it in my work. While this might not be everyone's calling, I know that this is where God is calling me at this time.



“...we have been putting
our trust in the Lord
and He has provided for us so far.”

A two income family has become the new norm. We see many families not being able to afford living on one income. I've worked with so many wonderful moms who are doing what they can to help provide financially for their family. I have witnessed a coworker's tears as she reflected on missing her child's first steps. I've seen another mom crying watching her child turn over for the first time on a video from the babysitter. These are sacrifices these working moms make and my heart goes out to them for the sacrifices they are making. For our family, we are going against the grain and navigating how to survive without my nursing income. Between the extra hours my husband has picked up, and the few hours a week I do data collection after my daughter goes to sleep, we are able to make ends meet. I thought it was impossible to afford a life without my salary, but we have been putting our trust in the Lord and He has provided for us so far.

Having a purpose outside of the home was something I thought I would need because through the years it was often something I heard mothers say they needed. Some days being home with my child seem really monotonous and it is important for my well-being to have adult conversations. Many women might fill this hole with interactions at work, but I have joined some weekly clubs and programs that build structure into my week so that my child can socialize with other children, but also so that I can socialize with other adults. In my experience and from my chats with other moms, I am learning more and more how beautiful and sanctifying being a mother is. I have this amazing opportunity to be able to focus more of my time and energy into my marriage and motherhood, molding holiness in my family, and for that I am grateful to God.

Carly Chirchirillo is a stay-at-home mom in Queens where she lives with her husband and daughter.

WHEN ALL OTHER LIGHTS GO OUT: HOPE AMID DARKNESS FROM J.R.R. TOLKIEN

By Thomas Salerno

Autumn is a wonderful time of year to meditate on the virtue of hope. As the year wanes, the days shorten, and evening comes earlier, we are reminded starkly of the darkness we experience in the world around us and of our own mortality. But hope can be found in many unlikely places, including in the popular fiction of our time, and especially in the genres of fantasy and science fiction. Many of these stories have given me great comfort in moments of personal doubt, anxiety, and loss. These imaginative tales have inspired me to tread forward in hope, confident that the battle between light and darkness has already been fought — and that light has won.

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* saga hope and light are inextricably linked in a particularly powerful and poignant way. If you've read the books or have seen director Peter Jackson's film adaptations, you'll no doubt remember the marvelous glass phial (small pocket-size container) given to Frodo the hobbit by the elf-queen Galadriel. This humble phial contained a pure light that shone brightest at night or under shadow. Tolkien was a devout Catholic, and so intentionally wrote Galadriel as a Marian figure. The name Galadriel, incidentally, evokes both light and queenship; it means "crown of radiance" in the elf tongue. Like the Queen of Heaven, whose intercession on behalf of her earthly children obtains for us the grace to resist temptation and despair, Galadriel bestowed on Frodo the gift of a sacred light to be used "in dark places, when all other lights go out."

The elven lady's gift proved indeed to be a light of deliverance in the darkest of places. Frodo and his faithful companion Sam used the power of the phial to escape the lair of the monstrous spider Shelob and later relied on its reassuring presence to strengthen them in courage and hope during their arduous trek across the hellish realm of Mordor, the land "where the Shadows lie".

At one forlorn moment, Sam is moved by the beauty of a star, seen for a brief instant shining through the volcanic fumes of Mordor: "The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach."

In Tolkien's Middle-earth mythos, the forces of evil often seek to consume or destroy the sources of light and beauty in the world. But the victory of darkness is always temporary; the light endures, and even when it seems to die, it is reborn in dramatic and surprising ways. This motif is signified brilliantly by Galadriel's phial, which reflects the light of Eärendil's Star, the brightest star in the heavens, which itself is the sole remaining source of the primordial light that dispelled the darkness in the Eldar Days of the Middle-earth, long before the sun and moon came into being.

Even when their quest to destroy the evil of the One Ring seemed beyond all hope, Frodo and Sam refused to succumb to despair; they were certain that no matter what evil things might befall them, the Shadow's days were numbered. The light of Galadriel's phial contains a lesson for us, as well. When the forces of darkness and evil and injustice seem to hold sway in our world, despair is unbecoming of a Christian. The shadow is indeed only a passing thing; light endures forever, death never has the last word. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Light of the World, has already conquered darkness and death through his Passion and glorious Resurrection.

So, as the leaves fall and the chill wind blows and the nights lengthen, I would invite you to return to *The Lord of the Rings* or, perhaps, to experience it for the first time. If so, I hope that in your journey to Middle-earth you find the same solace and joy that I first discovered as a young boy. May the adventures of Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring strengthen our faith in Christ's victory and our hope in his promises. And may that hope be a light to us in dark places, when all other lights go out.

MONTHLY SAINT: *St. Francis* *The Humble Mendicant*

By Matthew Chicavich

At the beginning of this month, the Church celebrated the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. October 4th brings to mind several anecdotes of Saint Francis' life, some more fantastic than others.

Known as a strict ascetic, stories of Saint Francis going to extremes to avoid occasions of sin abound. One story often retold amongst the faithful portrays Saint Francis throwing himself into a thornbush in order to rid himself of doubts and temptations of the flesh. The act achieved its desired effect, but contact with the Saint's body caused roses to bloom. To this day, that type of rose (*Rosa Canina Assisiensis*) grows in the rose garden at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi. Outstandingly, this particular rose can be found thornless.

Another well known story regarding the exploits of Saint Francis involves a wolf terrorizing the Umbrian town of Gubbio. The wolf was so terrible and fierce that it not only attacked the town's farm animals but also its people. Terror ensued to the point where the townspeople were afraid to go beyond the walls of Gubbio. St. Francis resolved to free Gubbio from its captivity and confront the wolf. As witnesses watched from a distance, St. Francis tamed the wolf with the sign of the Cross and the command, "Come hither brother wolf, in the name of Christ I command you to neither harm me nor anyone else."

He continued to rebuke the wolf for its devilish actions and brought peace between it and the town of Gubbio in the loving and compassionate way only St. Francis could. He created a pact between Gubbio and the wolf to provide sustenance in return for an end to the killing. Truly this is a miracle of the most unique kind.

Whether these two tales are fact or sensational hagiography, the truth is that the Lord worked wonders through Saint Francis' constant openness, acceptance, and cooperation with God's Will. The deeper one digs into St. Francis' life, the more one finds a man passionately in love with Jesus Christ, willing to do anything for Him.

Another obscure story of Saint Francis concerns God calling on him to go to the door of a childhood friend to beg for alms. Compared to the previous two stories, this undertaking appears less challenging and completely ordinary. We associate the image of a holy mendicant with Saint Francis. Begging was his specialty. Yet, Saint Francis initially balks at his Lord's request. An internal battle ensues between pride and humility, shame and self worth, the old Francis and the Francis that belongs to Jesus alone.

Here is a situation to which the ordinary Catholic can relate. The majority of people in the world will never invite pain from a plant to save their soul or come within visible distance of a wolf, but every person struggles for the virtue of humility. Saint Francis knew that Jesus was calling him closer through this act of letting go of everything, including whatever fear and anxiety aroused inside him from this encounter with a boy from his childhood.

As the Church celebrates the life of this most amazing Saint, she looks to Francis' extraordinary acts of faith, but more importantly the simplicity and humility with which he led his life. As part of the Litany of Humility petitions, "From the fear of being humiliated, despised, calumniated, and forgotten, deliver me, O Jesus."

Saint Francis of Assisi, pray for us.

Matthew Chicavich teaches religion and physics at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and four children. He has a masters degree in theology and a bachelor's degree in physics.






etmagazine
Press Release

By Marc Piperno

Inspired by their beloved Grandpa Nunzi, keeping the traditions of the good ole days alive has become the center of owner Michael Napolitano's vision. To sit at the dinner table to talk and laugh with friends and family, while enjoying an elevated take on old world Italian cooking, Nunzis invites you to come and experience the "New" Good Ole Days and create more memorable moments for the people in your life that you care about.

Opening last October, Nunzis is quickly becoming the hottest new restaurant in Farmingdale. With the help of Michael's father Vincent and brother Vincent Jr., they have all worked tirelessly to demonstrate that the incredible dishes made in the kitchen are only rivaled by the fantastic hospitality of Nunzis, where everybody is treated like a VIP. Traditions and respect for the good ole days, have all been incorporated into a sleek and modern layout by renowned designer Derek Axelrod.

"In keeping our grandfather's traditions alive, you will eat with us, drink with us and laugh with us. Families and friends will all enjoy delicious food, fine drinks, good music and making memories," states Napolitano. The modern take on classic dishes, highlights a menu that incorporates unique twists on old school Italian meals. With superb creations such as Grandmas Meatballs, Pappardelle & Lamb, Heritage Pork Chop; and desserts like Cannoli Cream with Biscotti.

Not to be missed are fascinating interpretations that will satisfy the cravings of adventurous foodies such as one-of-a-kind Limoncello Chicken Wings and a boisterous menu placement of a Philly Cheesesteak Sandwich. What Chefs Anthony LoCastro and Marc Wisehart have collaborated to produce, are memorable moments on a plate.

Nunzis is considered, by its loyalists as an immersive cultural experience that warmly embraces. The moment guests walk in the door they are dazzled by a lively environment that is both edgy and delightful. Both Axelrod and the Napolitano's worked harmoniously to launch what has now become a distinct trademark at Nunzis. Michael Napolitano seeks to enchant young and old alike by capturing a fresh, contemporary, and sleek look, with nods to the glamour and romance of classic Italian meals.

For more information, please visit nunzis1274.com, and on Instagram at [@nunzisingdale](https://www.instagram.com/nunzisingdale).

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