

WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

How many times do you think you have said it or heard someone else say it? Often people will automatically say after a wish or a hope, knock on wood, as they look for something wooden to rap on. It's a mindless habit, but did you ever stop to think of what you are doing when you say that?

Its origins are not definite, but it mostly appears to harken back to a belief in pagan tree spirits. Ancient cultures in Europe and the Celts believed that spirits or gods inhabited trees. Touching or knocking on a tree was a way to summon that spirit's protection, express gratitude, or scare away mischievous spirits. That does sound similar to what we often intend. Another theory is that it comes from a Victorian children's game of tag called Tiggy Touchwood, during which children were granted immunity from being tagged if touching wood. Some have suggested that this practice can be Christianized by thinking of the wood of the Cross.

While essentially a harmless practice, considering its history reminds us that it is so easy for practices and beliefs that are contrary to our Faith, to become normal. This is glaringly the case with Halloween. From Catholic roots, the eve of All Saint's Day **(all hallows Eve)**, it has become a celebration of everything dark. Through a proliferation of images and themes in movies and stories, it portrays evil as nothing more than harmless entertainment. While it is possible to go overboard with Halloween bashing, quite simply, families and children would be safer, more wholesome and happier if they focused instead on all that is good and holy. Perhaps instead of a plethora of skeletons and witches, we could decorate our home with the images of some incredible, heroic and holy men and women who did some extraordinary things and made a powerful and positive difference in our world. I'll take the North American Martyrs over Freddie Krueger any day! I'll take St. Padre Pio over Scream any day! I'll take the Blessed Mother over the Wicked Witch of the West any day!

"But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Luke 11:20)