

Letter From The Pastor: Msgr. William L. Young, III



Dear Parishioners:

Halloween is short for *All Hallows' Eve*. It is the vigil of All Saints (All Hallows) Day. All Saints Day is a Holy Day of Obligation, and thus a major feast on the Catholic Church's liturgical calendar. The three days — Halloween, All Saints and All Souls — are a wonderful reflection on the Communion of Saints. Every Sunday, we proclaim that we believe in this aspect of our faith.

All Hallows' Eve prepares us for the celebration of the holy ones who have been called into the glory of the fullness of the Kingdom. It is like thumping Satan on the head because death does not have the last laugh. God does. Life and holiness win!

All Saints' Day was established by Pope Boniface IV in 609 AD. He also established the feast of All Souls', which is the day after All Saints' Day. In the mid-eighth century, Pope Gregory III moved the feast from May 13 to November 1. Pope Gregory IV about 100 years later made the feast obligatory in 840 AD.

As these celebrations spread through the Church, local Christians incorporated their own traditions from historical practices (e.g. evergreens became Christmas trees, et al.). The Irish used turnips to make a Jack-O-Lantern (to ward off unwanted visitors), and when they came to America it morphed to the pumpkin with the smiley face. But Halloween has changed a lot.

Halloween has exploded in this modern world. This year, the costumes and candy will cost about 6.5 billion dollars, second only to Christmas. We have a growing problem in two particular areas. First, there is a move to more graphic depiction of the satanic and bloody gore in many costumes. No one should ever take lightly the symbols of Satan. Never trivialize the Evil One because he then has the opportunity to enter in and wreak havoc in your soul.

Secondly, the sexual entente sends signals of availability and openness to sexual activity. These costumes objectify our sons and daughters. The over sexualization of children puts children and teens even more at risk. They deserve for caring adults to help protect them by leading, and, if need be, demanding that proper costumes be worn.

Is it OK to dress up as a ghost? This may surprise, but the Church's catechism doesn't mention ghosts. We do believe in a spirit world (remember the angels), and God can allow them to be seen. We do not believe in such things as "lost souls" wandering around looking for a place or time to *cross over*.

Our Bible teaches us that, "Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment," (Heb. 9:27). When we die to life here on earth, we are judged worthy of heaven or hell by the One who knows us better than all others. We don't come back again and again until we get it right — the *cross over* is immediate.

Our Catechism does teach us; *All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future.*⁴⁸ *Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone* (2116). Rid your home of any these items, destroy Ouija boards and any other paraphernalia of the occult as they are signs of putting things before God.

Halloween can be a fun holiday, and we should join in the fun, but not to the extent that we violate our faith. Nor ought we eat too many of the treats lest we become sick. (Gal 5:13). All things in moderation as the old saying opines. St. Paul's letter to the Galatians teaches, "*For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love*" (Gal 5:13). Refuse to give into the trap of false freedom that will lead to slavery — never underestimate Satan.

Let us have the fun AND keep in mind that All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day are designed to help us keep our minds and hearts on our heavenly Father's love for us and his mercy poured out through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is what we honor on Halloween. Have a great celebration, don't eat all the candy too quickly, share with others and thank God for all the saints and souls in purgatory waiting for entry into glory.

Lastly, don't forget that All Saints' is a Holy Day of Obligation. See you at Mass.

Pace – bene,
Msgr. Bill