

The Question of the Week

Today is Halloween. That is a shorten or condensed form of the expression of All Hallow's Evening. All Hallows Even. All Hallow's E'en. Halloween. All Hallows is the Olde English way of saying All Saints. Think of the Our Father where we say: Hallowed be thy name. (may your name be held holy). The Holy Ones are the Saints.

The next paragraphs are from the Diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"In contrast to popular culture's observance of Halloween, even the customary appeal to the "frightful" has a devotional meaning in the Catholic tradition. Props such as skulls and scythes have historically recalled our mortality, reminding us to be holy because we are destined for judgment (Hebrews 9:27, Rev. 14:15). Visible symbols of death thus represent a reminder of the last things---death, judgment, Heaven, and hell (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1020-65). While the "Gothic" aspect of Halloween reminds us of Christian teaching about the resurrection of the dead, our culture often represents this in a distorted manner, for when the dead are raised they will in truth be "clothed with incorruptibility" (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). Separated from Catholic teaching, grim or ghoulish or "Gothic" costumes can furthermore be mistaken as a celebration or veneration of evil or of death itself, contradicting the full and authentic meaning of Halloween. For the Christian, Christ has conquered death, as has been prophesied and fulfilled, "Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55; cf. Hosea 13:14). Christ has conquered death by his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, the Paschal Mystery whose graces are evident in the glory of all saints.

We also want intentionally to avoid those things that are contrary to our Catholic faith but have become popularized through the secular adaptation of Halloween. Turning to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we want to refrain from glamourizing or celebrating anything involving superstition, witches, witchcraft, sorcery, divinations, magic, and the occult (cf. CCC 2210-2117). We want to be good models of Christian virtue for those we serve and make clear distinctions between that which is good and that which is evil. As the annual celebration of Halloween approaches, we are reminded of the importance of maintaining the Catholic meaning and purpose of all holy days, especially those which have been adopted and adapted by the culture around us. Over time, popular culture has made it difficult to discern the authentic spirit of this great feast, an important time when we, God's pilgrim church on earth, rejoice in the lives of all God's saints whom we wish to follow into eternal life."

At the very least we can keep some of this in mind for future celebrations of Halloween. Isn't that a worthwhile idea? The question of the week.