

## HALLOWEEN

Good morning, well perhaps a more appropriate greeting should be:

### TRICK OR TREAT!

Most likely most of us have never given it a thought - where did the celebration of Halloween come from?

As a kid, it was all about fun and candy. Even as a young adult I enjoyed the chance to masquerade and party. Some of us wonder: Is Halloween a secular holiday or worse, something more dangerous? Should our children dress up like ghosts and goblins?

Lost in the debate is the history of Halloween, which, far from being a pagan religious event, is actually rooted in a Christian celebration that's almost 1,300 years old.

"Halloween" is a name that means nothing by itself. It is a contraction of "All Hallows Eve," and it designates the vigil of All Hallows Day, more commonly known today as [All Saints Day](#). ("Hallow," as a noun, is an old English word for saint. As a verb, it means to make something holy or to honor it as holy.) All Saints Day, November 1, is a [Holy Day of Obligation](#), but only if it falls on a Sunday in the US. In the early days the feast of All Saints was celebrated on the May 13<sup>th</sup>, but in 731 Pope Gregory III moved it to November 1st.

The day is dedicated to the saints of the Church, that is, all those who have attained Heaven. There are over 10,000 named saints but all in heaven are saints. That's why we have the Feast of All Saints, to celebrate the Saints: the "named saints" and all the uncounted, un-canonized saints who make up the bulk of the heavenly

population. Obviously there are far more saints in heaven than there are saints recognized by the Church. Many people think that honoring saints was something the Church set up later, but it was part of Christianity from the very beginning. By the year 100 A.D., Christians were honoring other Christians who had died, and asking for their intercession. This practice came from a long-standing tradition in the Jewish faith of honoring prophets and holy people with shrines. The first saints were martyrs, who had given up their lives for the Faith during the persecution of Christians.

All Saints Day should not be confused with All Souls' Day, which is observed on November 2nd, and is dedicated to those who have died and have not yet reached heaven.

If you have been listening, you are probably sitting there thinking - wait a minute, I'm definitely not a saint so does that mean I can't get into Heaven? So this led me to more research on Catholic teaching on the Saints and "who and how we get to Heaven", ... and Purgatory.

**All this from "trick or treat".**

**My foundational belief is that we get to Heaven only by the grace and mercy of God.**

Only what is perfect is allowed into heaven, if you are not perfect you won't get into heaven **but fortunately you can go to purgatory first to be made perfect.**

Everyone who makes it to heaven are saints, that doesn't mean they are recognized as such on earth or declared as such by the Church.

**So next stop - How does the Church choose saints?**

For hundreds of years, starting with the first martyrs of the early Church, saints were chosen by public acclaim. Though this was a more democratic way to recognize saints, some saints' stories were distorted by legend and some never existed. Gradually, the bishops and finally the Vatican took over authority for approving saints. Canonization, the process the Church uses to name a saint, has only been used since the tenth century. In 1983 Pope Paul II amended the process:

### **Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister***

Candidates go through the following steps (I will present high-level summary) on the way to being declared saints:

1 - When enough information has been gathered, the congregation will recommend to the [pope](#) that he make a proclamation that the candidate is a **Servant of God's**.

2 – Once the person's heroic virtues are accepted by the pope, they are declared **Venerable**.

3 – First Miracle

- For a martyr, the Pope has only to make a declaration of martyrdom, a certification that the venerable gave his or her life voluntarily as a witness for the faith and/or in an [act of heroic charity](#) for others.
- If the Venerable was not a martyr—all non-martyrs are "confessors" as they "confessed" or bore witness to their faith by how they lived their lives—it must be proven that a [miracle](#) has taken place by his or her intercession: that is, that God has shown a sign that the person is enjoying the Beatific Vision by God performing a

miracle in response to the Blessed's prayers. Today, these miracles are almost always miraculous cures, as these are the easiest to establish based on the Catholic Church's requirements for a "miracle". (The patient was sick, there was no known cure for the ailment, prayers were directed to the Venerable, the patient was cured, the cure was spontaneous, instantaneous, complete, and lasting, and doctors cannot find any natural explanation.)

This allows [beatification](#), giving the venerable the new title "**Blessed**"

4 – Second miracle:

To be canonized a **Saint**, at least two miracles normally must have been performed through the saint's intercession after his or her death, for potential saints who were not declared martyrs- in which case only one miracle is needed (i.e., normally an additional miracle after that granting beatification). By the Rite of Canonization the Supreme Pontiff, by an act which is protected from error by the Holy Spirit, elevates a person to the universal veneration of the Church. By canonization the Pope does not make the person a saint. Rather, he declares that the person is with God and is an example of following Christ worthy of imitation by the faithful.

**I am a Catholic that is grateful for (what I call) the back door into Heaven – Purgatory.**

As Jesus and Paul teach, that we are "*called* to be saints" but this requires our developing habits of obedience to Jesus and persistent virtue with the help of the Holy Spirit. These things, pursued till we are fully conformed to the image of God in Christ, are what make people saints in the sense of "dwellers forever in heaven". So

we *were* saved (by Christ through his death and resurrection); we *are being* saved (by his ongoing work through the sacraments and our cooperation with grace); and we *will be* saved (when we pass this probationary period, die in a state of grace, and are safely in heaven (or purgatory, which finishes the job of readying us for heaven if we did not finish it here)).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines purgatory as a "purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven," which is experienced by those "who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified" (CCC 1030). The purification is necessary because, as Scripture teaches, nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (Rev. 21:27) and, while we may die with our mortal sins forgiven, there can still be many impurities in us, specifically venial sins and the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

### **Back to Halloween:**

So what about the claim that Halloween has pagan origins?

In Celtic peasant culture elements of the harvest festival survived, even among Christians, just as the Christmas tree owes its origins to pre-Christian Germanic traditions without being a pagan ritual. Samhain (sow-in) date back 2000 years ago and marked their New Year on November 1<sup>st</sup> (remember Pope Gregory III in 731?). The Celtic elements included lighting bonfires, carving turnips (and, in America, pumpkins), and going from house to house, collecting treats, as carolers do at Christmas. But the "occult" aspects of Halloween—ghosts and demons—actually have their roots in Catholic belief. Christians believed that, at certain times of the year (Christmas is

another), the veil separating earth from [Purgatory](#), Heaven, and even Hell becomes more thin, and the souls in Purgatory (ghosts) and demons can be more readily seen. Thus the tradition of Halloween costumes owes as much, if not more, to Christian belief as to Celtic tradition.

Pious concerns with Halloween aren't new. In post-Reformation England, All Saints Day and its vigil were suppressed, and the Celtic peasant customs associated with Halloween were outlawed. [Christmas](#) and the traditions surrounding it were similarly attacked, and the Puritan Parliament banned Christmas outright in 1647. In the Northeastern United States, Puritans outlawed the celebration of both Christmas and Halloween, which were revived largely by German Catholic (in the case of Christmas) and Irish Catholic (in the case of Halloween) immigrants in the 19th century.

Halloween evolved into the community/kids event (contemporary practices) in 1940s - 1950s.

It is important to remember these basic facts:

- Halloween is a secular holiday that comes the night before All Saints' Day, but originates as the vigil of All Saints Day.
- All Saints' Day is on November 1, and it is a Holy Day of Obligation if it falls on a Sunday in the US.
- All Souls' Day is on November 2, and it is NOT a Holy Day of Obligation.

Bet you didn't think there was this much to know about HALLOWEEN!

# HALLOWEEN

Men's Ministry

October 29, 2016

Questions:

1. Though canonization is infallible and irrevocable, it takes a long time and a lot of effort. So while every person who is canonized is a saint, not every holy person has been canonized. You have probably known some "saints" in your life. Who are those "saints" that you have known in your life?
2. St Paul writes that you are called by God to be a saint yourself. When you reflect on that calling, how is your journey to sainthood look?
3. What and who are the helpers for your goal of sainthood?
4. What are your thoughts on Purgatory? Grateful repair shop? Long or short delay to Heaven?
5. We have "Keep Christ in Christmas" on our cars to help remind us that Christmas is not a secular holiday. What might we do to remind others that Halloween is about reverence for the saints in our Church?
6. Are the saints relevant to your faith life? Why or why not?