

HALLOWEEN

NIGHT OF LIGHT



Many families have their doubts about celebrating Halloween. For some, the practice of trick-or-treating is seen as yet another invasion by American culture. For others, the association with pagan ritual is viewed as inappropriate and even dangerous for children.

In fact, Halloween has deep Christian roots, dating back to the eighth century, when Pope Gregory III established All Hallows (known to Catholics as All Saints Day) on November 1st. This was to be a day to honour all the saints who died with or without Church recognition. All Souls Day follows on November 2nd and is a time in which we pray for all the dead, including our own special friends and family.

Light, long a symbol of life in Jesus, was used on 'Halloween' (meaning 'All Holies (or Saints) Eve') to welcome good spirits and ward off evil ones. Candles were lit and placed inside hollowed-out squash, turnips, or later, after the discovery of America, pumpkins. Children, wearing masks, would go 'souling' from door to door, begging for soul cakes for the those in purgatory.

Children love to dress up and its good for them too: it encourages fantasy play which stimulates their imagination and healthy interaction with siblings and friends. But it doesn't have to be expensive or difficult if you keep your eye open for discarded clothing and fabrics to develop a dress up wardrobe.

At All Hallows, we celebrate...

- **Our heavenly family** - Those men and women of virtue and faith who lead lives of holiness, courage and generosity and are now saints in heaven. Their heroic lives inspire us and provide excellent role models for our children. Some families like to pray the 'Litany of the Saints', calling on favourite saints to "pray for us".
- **Our deceased family members** - This is a good time to recall fond memories of our loved ones, go through old photo albums, visit their grave sites, and of course, pray for them. Children enjoy lighting candles and saying prayers for loved ones.
- **Our living family** - We shy away from talking about death, but really, death is the surest reality of our lives. This feast reminds us to reflect on our priorities and make the most of every opportunity to express our love and affection for those close to us. Use this time to affirm a saintly quality or virtue that you see in each family member.



Tips to Celebrate Halloween

Doorknocking

In keeping with the original meaning of All Hallows as a tribute to the saints, children can dress in themes that relate to our Christian faith.

- Angels: Small children make delightful angels (e.g. The Archangel Michael, Archangel Gabriel)
- Warrior Themes (e.g. St George, St Joan of Arc etc.)
- Animal Themes: Butterflies are symbol of the resurrection, doves a symbol of peace, the lion features in bible stories etc.)

Try modern day heroes such as Superman, Wonderwoman, Obiwan Kenobe, or Pocahontas. For more tips on how to create costumes from recycle clothes, see cathfamily.org

Night of Light

Some church groups have used the fun of Halloween to connect with the wider community. Think about organising small groups of parishioners to carry candles or glow sticks throughout the streets while singing joyfully of the Light of Christ.

Treats and Sweets

To avoid turning our children's smiles into the toothless grin of the Jack-o-lantern with too many sweets and chocolate, consider giving savoury snacks (small packets of chips or crackers, cheese sticks), fruit sticks, sultanas, cupcakes, muffins, fairybread or the traditional soul cakes (flat, oval shortbread cookies with currants, cinnamon and nutmeg).

Mel-o-latern

Jack-o-laterns are traditionally made from soft skinned American pumpkins. A fun and practical alternative is a watermelon. Cut a 'lid' in the top of your melon and scoop out the flesh with a large spoon. Use a knife to cut eyes, nose and a toothless grin. Light a candle and place it inside. (serve the cubed watermelon to your trick or treat)



SAFETY TIPS

Before setting out, remind children to:

- 1. Only call on homes where they know the occupants or a Halloween symbol is displayed.**
- 2. Be courteous and considerate of others at all times.**
- 3. Stay in a group, do not enter any house, and stay within the neighbourhood boundaries set for them. (parents are advised to supervise their children when trick or treating)**