

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Halloween: Trick or Treat? Beware!

This week contains a day that figures prominently in our popular culture: “Halloween”. Every year, we see houses decorated with scary ghosts and goblins, advertisements throughout Ohio for “haunted” anything from hayrides to islands (I used to go to a “haunted island” put on by an FFA in Senecaville Lake near Cambridge years ago – quite an impressive after-dark boat ride and tour of an island made over into scary displays replete with the sounds of hidden chainsaws!), and we see children dressed up in all sorts of costumes demanding “Trick or Treat!”, pleading for yet more and more amounts of sugar.

While certainly, the casual involvement with these customs are not normally a cause for concern, as Christians, we do want to make sure of two important considerations: 1) We want to use this week as an opportunity to remind our children – and our culture – of the true, authentic meaning of the days coming up this week. Halloween (much like Christmas) has been “morphed” by our culture into something very commercialized and bearing very little semblance to what its true and original meaning was meant to be. The word “Halloween”, of course, is a contraction of the phrase “All Hallows’ Eve”. This means, the “eve”, or the night before, the Feast Day of “All Hallows”, which is Old English for “All Saints”. (“Hallow” means “holy”, as in the Lord’s Prayer: “Hallowed be thy name”.) All Saints’ Day is a Catholic feast day that has been celebrated on November 1 since the Middle Ages, as a way to honor all the saints in Heaven. That’s why the “eve” of this day falls on October 31. But note that the emphasis is on the positive and holy: the Saints, our role models for holiness. We ask the saints to pray for us, since we need their help. The next day, November 2, has been set aside by the Catholic Church for centuries as “All Souls’ Day”. This is a more somber day, in that here we focus on the “poor souls” in Purgatory: the state of “cleansing” for the recently-deceased who died in friendship with God (not in a state of mortal sin and therefore not deserving of Hell) but who still need final cleansing of their souls from attachments and minor sins. Nearly all of us will first need to go through Purgatory. Those souls need our help. We pray for All Souls in Purgatory. But this, too, is a positive thing; those in Purgatory are on their way to Heaven. We are not here at all dealing with demons or matters of the devil. So, these are the true meanings of the holy days coming up this week.

2) We also want to be careful not to allow the pop cultural observance of “Halloween” to lead us or our children into an unhealthy interest in matters of the devil, the demonic, the occult, or spiritual darkness. I do get concerned when our children are exposed to images of the demonic or the occult with little catechesis or explanation about how harmful those things truly can be. In my pastoral work, I have seen first-hand that the realm of the demonic is definitely real and not to be taken lightly, and nothing to joke about. And it is certainly the case that our culture has become decidedly more fixated on the occult; even the widespread use of the “Harry Potter” novels and movies has led to such an unhealthy increase of curiosity with the occult by many youth, that Catholic exorcists have noted a marked rise in youth and young adults who are struggling with demonic problems after dabbling in the actual occult from wanting to “be like Harry Potter”. As Christians, I urge all of our parish families to keep a healthy perspective on the events of this coming week, to safeguard our children, and in fact to bring our children to Mass this week on the Solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of All Souls, to take joy in the true meaning of these days.

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at hamilton.college@outlook.com or at 419-634-2626.

THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by “Jackie”, the Pastor’s Cat



Hi boys and girls! My name is “Jackie”, and as you know, I am Father Ferguson’s cat! I am really mad! That’s right! Halloween is coming up this week, and I keep hearing people say that black cats are spooky, evil, haunted, and strange! Hmmp! Well, I am a black cat, and I can tell you that I am not at all evil and spooky. Yeah, we cats can be strange sometimes (at least Father often says so), but we are definitely NOT haunted! I think those people should think more about the true meaning of “Halloween”: “Hallowed” means “Holy”! It’s really a chance to celebrate the Saints! So, why not dress up as a Saint for Halloween this year, like Saint Francis, who always loved cats, no matter what color they were! Have a “purr”-fect week!