

## Hallowe'en



I hope you've remembered to have your pumpkins hollowed out, with faces all carved and embellished, and a candle glowing inside.

Tonight, we can expect children knocking at the door, singing out "Trick or Treat", and we open the door to see all the costumes, and the children with baskets ready for candies and the like. There'll be spooks, and fairies, and clowns, and oddly dressed teens—it can be great fun all round. It is a favourite time for children and adults alike.

**Hallowe'en** means the first evening of All Saints Day—one of the great festivals of the Christian year—and spooks and goblins have nothing to do with it—in fact, All Saints Day celebrates the Christians who have arrived at the centre of all reality, into the Presence of God, who have run the great race and won. Let's see what that is all about.

God created humanity to have a relationship with Him, a relationship of Love, into which we could grow and blossom with Him for Eternity. That at least was the idea—but we spoiled it by turning away from our Creator, choosing instead our own selfish ideas, choosing to love ourselves instead of living in God's love—and that sin cut us off from God eternally. It was not what God intended. And so He set about to Rescue us—to give us a chance to return to Him, and to live in His Love eternally. After centuries of preparation, God came Himself to our earth, lived as one of us, and we called Him Jesus. We turned against Him, even here, and crucified Him—but He rose from the dead, and returned to Heaven, there as our representative to offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice to the Father for our forgiveness. And it worked. The way was now open for us to return to the Father, and to live forever with Him.

For that to happen, we needed to be forgiven, and to begin to grow into what God expected us to be in the beginning to become what we call Saints. When we were baptized, we were connected to Jesus our Saviour, and integrated into His family the Church. As we grew, we became aware that Jesus was our Saviour and we pledged to follow Him as our Lord. Day by day, year by year, we grew in holiness, sometimes by leaps and bounds, sometimes crawling, sometimes slipping backwards, sometimes detouring to follow our own desires. But with many ups and downs, we grow towards our destiny—we are becoming what we already are, the Saints of God. The Saints we celebrate tomorrow are our Graduates—they are ones who by the Grace of God have arrived—they have finally become the humanity that God intended in the first place—and are now enjoying His Presence in Glory for ever.

We here are still in our growing—our becoming—journeying through this land, seeking the Glory that shall be. Jesus our Pioneer (see Hebrews) has blazed the trail for us back to the Father, and He gives us His Grace by which we can become the Saints of God. Sunday by Sunday at the Altar we join with Jesus in offering the Sacrifice of His Perfect Life to the Father, and then receive in the Blessed Sacrament the Grace that we need to walk with Jesus that coming week.

We are sinful, but we find the forgiveness we need from Jesus, who died and rose for us.

We are unhealthy in our spirit, but we are made Healthy through the blood of Jesus shed for us.

We are weak, but we are strengthened by His Grace, which makes us strong.

St. John, in his book of Revelation in the New Testament, tells us that Heaven is the dwelling place of the Father, is filled with His Glory and Love, and filled with the Light of His Presence. It is a place of Joy and Love. It includes the River of Life, that brings new life to all people, while the Tree of Life, that was forbidden to humanity in creation, now bears fruit each month for all the Saints. Its leaves are for the Healing of the Nations, an example of the inclusivity of God's Heaven. Those in Heaven see the Face of God, and bear on their foreheads His Mark. You already do bear that Mark, you know, for each of us has His Mark branded into our foreheads, the Mark of the Cross, placed there at our Baptism. You see, we are already known and loved by the Lord who died and rose for us.

Of course, though we are strengthened for our journey by His Grace, we are also attacked by the enemy. The Hallowe'en spooks are not only fun, but they are serious reminders to us that the enemies of the Gospel surround us. Day by day, we are tempted to abandon our destiny, perhaps to take some time out to rest, to neglect our relationship with Jesus our Saviour. The enemies of God have no power to hurt us, but they certainly work hard to tempt us, to deflect us on our journey, to make fun of our loyalty to Christ. Never forget that the enemies of God are everywhere to deter us from our determination to walk with the Lord.

Tomorrow, All Saints Day, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus—for by His Resurrection He shows us the reality of Life Eternal. We celebrate also those of our fellow Christians who are our graduates, who have made it, who are now in Glory with the Father, who are enjoying all the wonders of the Heavenly Universe. We celebrate, as well, the eternal Life that Jesus wants us to share, the Eternal Life that He won for us by His Cross, the Eternal Life to which He calls each of us today.

Thanks be to God for His wonderful Gift.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen