



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Solemnity of All Saints

Hallowe'en as it should be celebrated

Readings: Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14, Ps 23, 1 John 3: 1-3, Matthew 5: 1-12

The supermarkets are filled with pumpkins. Ready-made costumes of witches, wizards and warlocks abound. Luminous fangs, imitation blood and adhesive wounds, deformed rubber prostheses are in high demand. Everyone, it seems, wants to look as disgusting and repulsive as possible. Some, I have noticed, have to make rather less effort than others.

It is the season of Hallowe'en, the vital marketing saviour of the retailer when the bottom fell out of the domestic fireworks market. Now, instead of the ritual burning of the effigies of Catholic traitors, we can remove all pretence of decency and celebrate the forces of darkness untrammelled. The Devil rides out.

Small children, spectacularly attired as vampires and werewolves, can now terrify the life out of unsuspecting pensioners by knocking on the door under cover of darkness and demanding money with menaces.

Children who were unwise enough to ship up, thus clad and intentioned at the presbytery in my last parish would be met by me in full cassock and cape and, with full theatrical vocals, warned of the triumphant power of

God and the certain end of the servants of the prince of darkness and his followers. They tended to leave very rapidly and always unrewarded.

In place of this noxious nonsense the parish used to put on its own All Hallows' Eve party for children. It was an opportunity for the children to come to the parish hall dressed as their favourite saint, to feast, play games, ask about each other's hero of the faith and celebrate the triumph of God's goodness in the individual human life and in eternity.

We would end with a torchlight procession along the main street to the Church and around the building singing the songs of Faith.

At the altar rails, in the candlelit church, we would kneel before the high altar which was surrounded by every ikon of every saint whose feast we kept and there we would pray. Each child lit a candle before their special saint. We gave thanks for the victory of Christ and the whole church triumphant in heaven and asked God to help us play our part in our generation. It was one of the most moving moments of the year and the children we still know look back on it with affection and formative emotion.

We did it – not to be overtly pious or puritanical – but to have the feast back for what it really is. All Hallows' Eve is the night when the bad guys, quite literally, will 'get the hell outa here' driven in defeat and terror and confusion by the triumphant army of the Angels and Saints and the unanswerable power of Almighty God.

Any fool can play with the glamour of evil (albeit at terrible cost).

We wanted our children to stand unashamedly with those whose lives were dedicated to righteous, justice, mercy and reconciliation and, in the words of the Canon of the Mass, 'on whose constant intercession in God's Presence we rely for unfailing help'.

We wanted them to grasp that, by virtue of their baptism and active confession of Christ they are part of that universal family of Faith that is worldwide and millennia deep, encompassing the history of Man and stretching into eternity.

We wanted them, in this small way, to capture the vision that had, perhaps long ago, kindled our hearts with fire for God and set us out on the pilgrimage of grace.

We wanted also to rekindle that vision in ourselves and learn again, from our children, that simple fearlessness that embraces goodness and seeks publicly to follow Jesus.

If we want to glorify wickedness we have only to watch the nightly news and do nothing about the wickedness that man confects around the world. If we want to follow the narrow way to holiness then we need to reconnect with our exemplars in the communion of saints. We need to be active, fearless, Catholics dedicated to the service of Jesus and the salvation of Man.

As we enter the season of the dead let us pay special attention to those who are alive in Christ and have been raised to the dignity of the altar in the calendar of the Saints.

Each of us will have chosen a patron saint.

Let this month be a time when we turn back to that particular special life that inspired us.

Let us read what they did, what they wrote, observe how they witnessed.

Let us, like small children again, in innocence and hopefulness, put on the clothing of their loving righteousness and aim high for holiness.

Let us ask for their prayers to assist us and let us long with all our hearts for our place, with those ikons- those whose lives have reflected the image of Christ - around the altar of God in the Communion of the Saints now and in all eternity.

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