

PASTOR'S CORNER

Hallowe'en as "Mocking Death"

The modern celebration of All Hallows Eve (or Hallowe'en; a little over a week away, even though candy has been in the stores since late August!) is a far cry from its many and varied origins. From ceremonies honoring the dead and seeking their help and intercession, Hallowe'en has become a thoroughly secular festival which, in its essence, mocks the existence of death. Children dress up in many costumes, but always present in fluctuating numbers are those dressed up as ghosts, witches, skeletons, zombies, vampires, etc. Each of these, in their own way, trivializes the occult or death itself by making something of them that is cute and harmless. Houses are decorated with gravestones, tombs, crypts and the like, but often by folks who never visit their own dead in real cemeteries. And finally, multiplying like the flu virus this time of year, there are the ever more increasingly banal and ludicrous horror movies and 'slasher' films.

At one level, of course, all of this is in good fun and the celebration of Hallowe'en can be an enjoyable and perfectly safe secular family experience. Right? Maybe. The reason I qualify my answer to this typical response is that there is something not quite healthy behind these expressions and trends. If our culture had a mature and wise engagement with the reality of human death, then maybe such celebrations could be dismissed as simply good, clean fun. But we don't; in fact our culture is in a state of deep denial concerning both death and dying.

We tend to mock what we fear, attempting to trivialize and tame that with which we are profoundly uncomfortable. We are a youth culture in love with the narcissistic ideal of perpetual youth and beauty. Old folks are encouraged to believe the happy fantasy that "you're as young as you feel!" Tell that to my back! More alarmingly, the number of parents and relatives who die without funerals is rapidly increasing, especially in the cities. More and more, children are opting for quick cremations with Mom or Dad then placed in an urn and tucked away on a book shelf or whose ashes are then scattered to the four winds. Our society has forgotten how to grieve. It fascinates me that men and women who are incapable of grieving with any depth the death of their own parents or other family members, cry crocodile tears at the deaths of Michael Jackson or Princess Diana or Robin Williams, people with whom they enjoyed absolutely no relationship.

A culture of death works very hard to deny what it is. For that reason, do we dream of perpetual youth and vitality and pursue such medical illusions at prodigious cost. Even among those who are pro-life in the abortion wars, there is a slow deadening to the horror of abortion. In a society that prides itself on "free speech and expression," no TV networks will run film showing the dismemberment caused by partial birth abortion. Why? What are we really afraid of? After all, babies don't die in these "procedures", only diseased tissue is removed! But let's not test our theory by actually filming what happens, for if we did so, we might discover that that "tissue" looks an awful lot like a human baby. Our very language and value system reflects our profound disease at the idea and reality of our death. The mark of any civilization can be measured by how it treats its elderly, its disadvantaged and its dead. On all three levels we are failing miserably. We are reverting to paganism and barbarism. We fiddle while Rome burns and rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic. We have become a culture that does one thing very well: we party and have a good time better than any prior civilization. Not even the Ancient Romans could equal our debauchery and ability to waste astronomical sums of money pleasing ourselves and serving our self-interest.

Only with Christ can death be mocked, for Christ alone has conquered the effects of death; though even then, we must travel through its veil. Without Christ, we are alone, and our false bravado and medical interventions look pathetic in the face of death's inexorable march. Hallowe'en is a transition and that's it. Mock death, but then get on your knees and pray to the saints for help in strengthening your faith that your mockery may not be thrown back in your face. Then with faith renewed, pray for your friends and family who have died that you may see them again in the security of heaven, where death is no more and Christ is all in all.

Happy All Saints and All Souls!

Fr. Stephen Geer

Ordinary Time

Day	Date	Time	Observance	Mass Intention
VIGIL	Oct 21	5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Mass	Robert Bell +
SUNDAY	Oct 22	9:00 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Henry Chieu Nguyen +
		11:30 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Missa pro populo
Monday	Oct 23		No service	
Tuesday	Oct 24	8:30 am	Ferial weekday	Charles Galles +
Wednesday	Oct 25	8:30 am	Ferial weekday	Margaret Schommer +
Thursday	Oct 26	10:00 am	Ferial weekday	Anna Holt +
Friday	Oct 27	8:30 am	Ferial weekday	Olaf Holt +
Saturday	Oct 28	8:30 am	Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles	Mike Moore +
			<u>Readings for the Sunday Mass:</u> Exodus 22.20-26; Psalm 18; 1 Thessalonians 1.5c-10; Matthew 22.34-40	
VIGIL		5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Mass	Betty Susnjara +
SUNDAY	Oct 29	9:00 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Joanna Kong +
		11:30 am	The Most Holy Eucharist of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Missa pro populo