

Halloween Reminds Us of Central Christian Messages

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(*Catholic Register* October 30, 1995 pg. 5 reprinted from the October 1995 issue of *Companion Magazine*.)

As we prepare to celebrate yet another All Hallow's Eve (the eve of All Saints' Day), we might want to ask ourselves what our culture's celebration of this night of ghosts and goblins has to do with our Catholic faith. Little kids dressing up as their favourite character, going door to door asking for candy and families carving jack-o-lanterns and placing them in their windows seem to have nothing to do with the heart of the Christian message.

Or do they? On a closer look, Hallowe'en reminds us of some of the central Christian messages.

On Hallowe'en, we open our doors to every stranger that knocks. Furthermore, we even invite them in for something to eat. This sounds very much like the ancient and central action of welcoming and extending hospitality to the stranger. Throughout Christian history there is a long tradition of people meeting Christ in the guise of a stranger. When the disciples met a stranger on the road to Emmaus, it turned out to be the Risen Lord. When the legendary St. Christopher helped a little child across the river, this too was found to be Christ. Indeed, Jesus Himself told us that whenever we encounter those in need, whenever we feed or give drink to someone who asks us, we are doing this to Christ Himself.



However, the strangers we meet in costume on Hallowe'en are traditionally



nasty rotten creatures – ghosts, witches, and monsters of all sorts. One wonders what these wicked creature have to do with our celebration of All Saints' day.

But another important Christian lesson is hidden in this ghoulish tapestry. Christianity says things are not always as they appear. Indeed, much of Jesus' teaching is about reversals; a tiny mustard seed grows into a great tree; the last shall be first; the one who dies for others truly has life. Most of all, in sinners we encounter God.

It was the worst of sinners, not the apparently righteous people, with whom Jesus associated. This is not because the righteous did not need Jesus, but because they did not think they did. Those who appear to be sinful may, in fact, be able to teach us



more about Christian living than those who claim to have their moral lives in perfect order. A glimpse of the exterior of a person does not necessarily equip us to judge the interior of the heart.

Finally, our Hallowe'en celebrations always end with everyone taking off their masks and revealing their tried and true selves. This is really what we are all about as Christians – living authentically as God calls us to live. Although it is difficult to live without hiding behind masks, we have the power to do so because we believe we are created in the image of the Creator. This is something we ought not to hide.

Perhaps this Hallowe'en we might reflect on these three lessons: our vocation as Christian people to welcome the stranger in our midst, the danger of judging people by what we see on the outside, and finally, the call to throw off masks and reveal our true selves to the people we love.

