



October 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

The last week of October is here, which means that Halloween is upon us. Halloween is a fun holiday as long as we don't take it too seriously. The name "Halloween" is the abbreviated form of "All Hallows Eve," an old English way of saying "All Saints Eve." ("Hallow" means "holy," as in "hallowed be thy name.")

I remember being taught that the Church established the Feast of All Saints on November 1 as a means of "baptizing" the pagan customs of the Druids in England at the time the Gospel was first brought to that territory. In addition, I was told that the Druids believed the spirits of the dead would appear on October 31. In response (I was told), the Church cleverly superimposed the Feast of All Saints on November 1 as a means of overcoming the superstitious pagan celebration with a Christian one. I have repeated this explanation of the origin of All Saints Day to others over the years. However, I recently checked into the origins of this feast and found no trace of this explanation! I learned that a celebration in honor of all the saints may have its origin from the dedication of the pantheon in Rome as a Christian church around the year 610. The temple of "all the gods" became the Church of "Santa Maria ad Martyres." That occurred on May 13, which is when the feast was celebrated for many years.

So how did the feast end up on November 1? One theory is that Pope Gregory III dedicated a chapel in St. Peter's in Rome to All the Saints in the eighth century, and this may have occurred on November 1. Gradually, the feast began to be celebrated on November 1 in other places including England. So, who knows? But one thing is certain – we will celebrate All Saints Day next Sunday, Nov. 1, the day after the secular and spooky observance of Halloween.

I hope your Halloween is fun, safe, and not too scary and may your true hope be fixed firmly on your heavenly home, where we hope to come at last and dwell with all the saints!

Your Pastor,
Msgr. Stephan Moloney