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## Halloween

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It's impressive the power of advertising in our environment, which, it makes us to buy, to think and to live in a way that we even hasn't meditated. When we notice it, we are trapped by the consumerism, which, it doesn't respect age, nationality or religious belief. It uses any element to attract our attention with the solely goal of selling. The problem is that many times, the ones that are left more damaged with this, are we, the Christians.

Among the examples that we might mention are Christmas and the All Saints feast. In the first one, we may notice, with a lot of sadness, that in the Christmas day, we are full of gifts, without a penny in our pockets, and worse of all, it's that our "shopping" activity has left aside the spiritual preparation for the Nativity of Christ feast. A Santa Claus has changed this figure, and the Christmas dinner now consists of a gift exchange and a delicious dinner (If it's possible, given the fact that we already spent all the money and the credit cards are well beyond the limit).

Now, our Christian feast has been transformed little by little in a commercial feast, in which many times the only absent is precisely the renowned: Christ.

Something similar happens with the celebration of "All Saints", and we notice that when the 31st of October is approaching, the stores are full of masks, monsters and witches disguises, pumpkins with horrific expressions, etc. Items that have no relationship with our faith and the feast to celebrate.

Given that we are getting closer to this date, I'd wish to share with you some elements of meditation that can lead us to measure our faith and to not be

influenced by the marketing, which, it might inclusively change or even destroy our faith and costumes.

A little of history

We can consider that the celebration of Halloween has two origins that were mixed throughout history.

### Pagan Origin

On one side we found that the pagan origin of this celebration might be imputed to a Celtic celebration, named "Samhain", and

the goal was to give cult to the death. The roman invasion (46 AC) to the British islands gave as a result the mix of its Celtic culture that disappeared after some time. Its religion called Druidism, disappeared in the majority of the Celtic communities by the end of the II century.



<http://blog.pappastax.com/index.php/2009/10/31/the-story-of-halloween/>

We don't know much about the Druids religion, since they didn't write about it. Everything was passed from one generation to another. We know that the Samhain festivities, were celebrated perhaps between the 5th and the 7th of November (between the summer equinox and the winter solstice) with a series of festivities that lasted one week, ending with the deaths feast and with this, a new Celtic year had begun. This feast was one of the mains, because they celebrated to which for us would be the "heaven and earth" (concepts that came up only with Christianity). For them, the place of the deaths was a place of perfect happiness in which no hunger or pain was present. The Celts celebrated this feast with rituals, in which the Druid priests, serving as mediums, talked with their ancestors, waiting to be leaded from this life to an immortal one. It is said that the "spirit" of the deaths came in this date to visit their old homes.

### Christian Origin

Since the IV century, the church of Sirius consecrated one day to celebrate "All Martyrs". Three centuries later, the Pope Bonifacio IV (615 AD) transformed a roman temple deified to all their gods (pantheon) into a Christian temple dedicated it to "All Saints", to all those that preceded us in the faith. The feast in honor to All Saints, initially was celebrated on May 13, but it was the Pope Gregory III (741 AD), who changed the date to November 1, which was the day of the "Dedication" of the Chapel of All Saints in the basilica of Saint Peter in Rome. Later, in the year 840, the Pope Gregory IV, ordered that the Feast of "All Saints" be celebrated universally. As a major feast, it had also its eve celebration in the "vigil" to prepare the feast (October 31). This eve vigil on the day preceding the feast of All Saints, inside the British culture was translated to English as: "All Hallows Even" (Vigil of All Saints). As time passed, its pronunciation was changed first to "All Hallowed Eve", then it changed to "All Hallow Eeen" and it ended with the word we know today "Halloween".

On the other side, since year 998, Saint Odil -Abbey of the Monastery of Cluny in the south of France- added the November 2 celebration as a feast to pray for the souls of the faithful departed. This day was called the Feast of "Faithful Departed" which first was spread all over France and then all over Europe.

### Halloween in our days

If we analyze the current celebration of Halloween, we'll see that it has little to deal with its origins. From them, it only remains the celebration of the deaths but given it a total different approach from the one it had in its origins. Also adding them little by little a series of elements that have totally distorted the feast of "the faithful departed" as well as the "all saints".

For instance, the tradition of "disguising" very possibly was born in France between the centuries XIV and XV during the celebration of the Feast of "All Saints". During that period, Europe was scourged by the bubonic plague or "bubonic pest" (also known as the "dark death") in which around half the population died. This created in the Catholics a great fear and preoccupation for the death. There were many masses in the feast of the "Faithful Departed" and there were born a lot of artistic representations that reminded the people of their own mortality.

These representations were known as the "Dance of the Death". Given the "burlesque" spirit of the French, in the eve of the "Faithful Departed" feast (November 2), the cemetery walls were decorated with images of the devil leading a chain of people: popes, kings, ladies, knights, monks, farmers, lepers, etc. (death doesn't respect anybody), guiding them to a tomb. These representations were shown as sketches, where the people were disguised as famous personages and in the different stages of life, including the death, which everybody must reach.

It seemed that the traditions of "Trick or Treat",



<http://inthefresh09.com/2010/10/16/>

has its origin in the persecution made by the protestants in England (1500-1700) against the Catholics. During this period in England, the Catholics didn't have legal rights: they couldn't practice any public position and were persecuted with fines, higher taxes and jail. Celebrating masses was a capital offense and hundreds of priests were martyred.

One event, product of this persecution and the defense of the Catholicism, was the attempt to blow up the protestant king James I and his parliament with cannon gunpowder, marking in this way the beginning of a catholic rising against its oppressors. However, the "Gunpowder Plot" was discovered in Nov 5, 1605, when the man taking care of the gunpowder, a careless converted, named Guy Fawkes, was captured and hung. This created a feast that sooner was made a great celebration in England (inclusive till our days). Many protestant bands, hidden with masks, celebrated this date visiting the Catholic homes and demanding beer and cakes for their celebration telling them: "Trick or Treat".

In this way, the "Guy Fawkes Day" came to America with the first colonists and it was moved to the 31st of October to join it with the Halloween feast. We can notice that today's Halloween feast is a product of combining many traditions that the first immigrants brought to US since the early 1800's, traditions that have been forgotten in Europe because they only make sense in the integration that Americans have given to this celebration.

### A brief Explanation

The 31 of October is a day that groups like satanic cults, mediums, druids and other groups use this holiday to identified themselves with witchcraft, dead and the call of dead spirits.

The "Samhain Festival" is called today "Feast of Dead", and it's recognized by all satanic cults, mediums and worshipers of the devil as a preparation of a new year for witchcraft. The author of the satanic bible Anton LaVey says there are three most important dates for the Satanist and are the following: 1. His Birthday, 2. The 30 of April, 3. Halloween which is the most important one. LaVey says that on the night of Halloween the satanic powers reach the highest level, and that any witch of cultist who had trouble with a spell normally can succeed on that day, because

Satan and his power are stronger that night.

The World Book Encyclopedia agrees that Halloween is the preparation for a new year of witchcraft and the beginning of everything that is cold, dark and dead. To prove this fact in different countries like United States, Mexico, Ireland and some others, they have black mass in which they practice satanic cults on that night.

Hollywood has contributed also to the change of this festivity by creating movies like Halloween, in which violence and murders give the viewers a sense of anguish and anxiety.

As we can see these elements are involved in the actual celebration of Halloween, and as a product of all that we have the costumes, cards and all the articles related with witches, black cats, vampires, ghost and all kind of frightening monsters some of them with satanic expressions.

### Reflections

After knowing all those facts regarding Halloween, we must ask ourselves:

What moral or religious experience is left in a child after wearing a costume of a witch, monster, vampire, dead etc in order to have fun? (Totally against the values of the Word of God that is peace, justice, love, kindness, loyalty, etc.)

How can we justify as Christian parents that our kids go out and damage other people's property? Aren't we contradicting ourselves with the education that we have taught our children to respect everybody and that menace and meanest are not good? Are we accepting that once a year you are allowed to do what is wrong?

With the costumes and the way they identified them with Hollywood aren't we promoting that evil and Satan is just a fantasy, part of an unreal world that is not part of our lives? What moral or religious experience is left after a Halloween party? Isn't this another way in which we are allowing our religious belief and faith in our Christian life to become weak?

If we accept all these ideas and we don't give them the real value, in order so our children can have fun, how can we correct and show our children the evil that is behind the Ouija Board that put in great danger their spiritual life. Or what can we tell the youngest that played Halloween, when they look for help with

mediums, witches, magicians, tarot card readers and astrologist, all of them who are against our Christian life?

Can it be possible that we messengers of peace, of love, of justice and carriers of the light of the world, could identify ourselves with all these facts that just express here injustice, darkness and death?

If we are sincere with ourselves and we look forward to be faithful to our Christian faith we must conclude that today Halloween celebration has changed completely the meaning of the original celebration and also is dangerous to our Christian faith.

### What can we do about these facts?

Close our eyes in order not to see the truth? Look for excuses to justify this festivity and ignoring this while it is spreading around the world? To prohibit our children to participate, while other kids are out in the street and they are not? Do you think that children will be able to understand the dangers and the reasons for us being opposed to this kind of celebration?

I think the answer is not simple, but Jesus told us: “Be peaceful like the dove and smart like the snake”. That is why I like to proposed to you an experience that we had at our church with an activity that gave us good results in bringing back the meaning of the festivity “All Hallow’s eve”

First thing we did was before the celebration we organized a catechism group for the children, to show them the importance of our saints, achievers of our faith. To let them know how it was not easy for our saints to be Christians, but with God’s grace everything is possible. That is why we celebrate All Saints Day on November the 1st.

We show them the negative aspects of the Halloween celebration the way it is celebrated today; we told them that it was not meant to be like that, and that many ideas contrary to our belief had infiltrated in this celebration. We made them see that God wants us to be good and that he does not want us to identify ourselves with witches, monsters, etc, because we are His children. We read them some scriptures where Jesus expelled the demons, so they can see that evil is

bad and against our faith.

To our festivity we encourage the children to wear a costume representing a biblical character or of a person that they knew that was good and they think she/he is in heaven. The kids were allowed to give a little speech about the person they represent.

Each child got a bag of candies, which they will share in each house that we will visit. We show them that Jesus taught us to give, because he gave himself to dead for us. Also that all holy men and we have more joy in giving instead of receiving. Upon our arrival to the house that we were visiting, we said: “God loves you” and we gave them a candy.

At the end there was a great party with everybody who participated. We gave a gift to the best costume and also to the best speech. It was a total success and best of all we had a wonderful and very positive Christian celebration experience. This way we reintegrated the true meaning of this celebration.

We must not allow the media and the contrary ideas to our belief make us do things that put our happiness and our families in danger. Let’s remember our values so we can be truth Christians, no matter that we have to go against the world and their ideas. Think that Jesus prayed to his father so that we could accomplish:

“I gave them your word, and the world has hated them for it; they do not belong to the world (any more than I belong to the world). I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one. They are not of the world, any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them by means of truth - “Your word is truth.” As you have sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world; I consecrate myself for their sakes now, that they may be consecrated in truth. John 17,14-19.



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