

# THE YEAR OF DISCIPLESHIP

## Is it Okay for Catholics to Celebrate Halloween?

- Halloween is short for All Hallows Eve. It is the vigil of All Saints (All Hallows) Day. All Saints Day is a [Holy Day of Obligation](#), and thus a major feast on the Catholic Church's liturgical calendar.
- Halloween (Oct 31) is connected with All Saints Day (Nov 1) and All Souls Day (Nov 2). These three days together are the "Days of the Dead." Halloween is the first day of this triduum, the time of year when the living honors all the dead in Christ: all the saints in heaven as well as all the holy souls detained in purgatory on their way to heaven. It is a beautiful celebration of the communion of saints!
- Catholics historically believed that on these "Days of the Dead," their annual feast, the veil between heaven, hell, and purgatory is the thinnest (that means you might even see some souls you know!).
- In the year 844 A.D., Pope Gregory III transferred the feast of All Saints (which honored especially the unknown martyrs and "hidden" saints whom we do not know by name) from May 13<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> to coincide with a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica which he dedicated to all the saints in heaven. His successor, Pope Gregory IV, extended the feast of the dedication to the universal Church.
- In medieval times, churches often displayed the bones and relics of their saints on Halloween (i.e. the vigil of All Saints Day) for public veneration.
- Halloween is a Catholic holiday and does not have its origins in paganism, Samhain, Celtic/Druidic festivals, the occult, or Satanism. This common misconception is modern anti-Catholic propaganda, with roots going back to the Protestant Reformation, and has no basis in historical fact.
- Immigrants to America brought their variety of local Catholic customs with them: Dressing up for Halloween comes from the French; Jack-o-Lanterns come from the Irish (originally carved turnips); and the English begged from door to door for "Soul Cakes," promising to pray for the departed loved ones of those who gave them these treats, the roots of trick-or-treating.
- The contemporary version of Halloween that glorifies the demonic with an emphasis on violence, horror, and sensuality pulls away from a traditional and faithful celebration of this essentially religious holiday. We encourage you not to participate in festivities or use decorations that glorify evil and violence.
- Halloween is a day to reflect on Christ's triumph over sin, death, and Satan; to meditate on our own mortality and duties to God; to shun sin and the devil; to give honor to the saints in heaven; and to pray for the souls of the faithful departed in purgatory. And, of course, to have fun with joyful feasting.

**HOW TO CELEBRATE:** Celebrate the feast by taking the family to Mass on All Hallows Eve, and pray for the intercession of the saints in heaven. Read about the lives of the saints, hand out holy cards, have a party with saint-based activities or costumes for kids. On All Saints Day thank the saints for what they have done for you; adore them in their honor. Enjoy a special meal with loved ones. Then, on All Souls Day, pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory and make sacrifices on their behalf, especially those whom you have known and loved, and for those who have no one to pray for them.