

ALL SAINTS

A little boy was walking with his father along a country road. The night was clear, and the child was enthralled by the splendour of the sky, all lit up with twinkling stars from one end to the other. After moments of reflection he suddenly looked up to his father and said: 'Daddy, I was just thinking, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, how wonderful the right side must be'.

But it is by the way we live in the wrong side that we merit the right side. Scripture says that 'all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each will get what we deserve for the things we did in the body, good and bad'. I don't think the saints left anything to chance in this department.

Saints are guided by the light of faith and reason in the big and little decisions of life. For them their faith is not something slotted into an hour on Sunday and then forgotten about for the rest of the week. Being part and parcel of their everyday lives, it informs all they do and are.

Tonight is Halloween. In pagan times it was regarded as a night of fear when demons roamed around to welcome the winter darkness. Even though we know children love dressing up for Halloween, I don't think it's wise to send them out depicted as Devils or Vampires especially if they are unfamiliar with the saints which is the real origin of tonight's Vigil. That would be harking back to its pagan origins - more 'halloween' than 'halloween'. It's like revelling in Christmas as a purely secular winter festival with little or no reference to the birth of Christ.

Our Faith forces us to combat the dark forces of this world which will include shadowy areas in our lives as well. From reading the lives of the saints we see where they were painfully aware of their own weaknesses and never pretended otherwise. They were real men and woman often plagued by temptations, just like us. But they never gave up the struggle.

The saints are our heroes. There are hordes of books on fantasy and fiction these days but in the saints we are dealing with real people who are now in heaven praying for us. We can't but be inspired by their lives of faith. Catholic children should be strongly encouraged to become familiar with the lives of these holy men and women.

When we were at secondary school one of the books on our recommended reading list was entitled, 'saints are not sad'. The impression you get sometimes is that a saint is a forbidding kind of person, a sort of joyless creature whose lost touch with the real world. They say that St Padre Pio, the stigmatic, had an impish sense of humour that lit up the lives of his confrères in the community - not at all like the grim person he is sometimes portrayed as. Sainthood and sadness just simply don't mix.

The demons of Halloween are depicted as welcoming the darkness characterised by the onset of winter. But the saints followed Jesus, the Light of the World whom they now see face to face eternally in beatific vision of heaven.