

## ALL SAINTS

*It was confirmation time and the bishop asked a boy to describe a saint for him. When the lad showed some hesitancy, his lordship pointed to a stained glass window enshrining the patron saint of the parish. The sun was shining through at the time. The eyes of the young hopeful followed the bishop's pointing finger and then reverted to him with a gleam of recognition. 'A saint' he said, 'is someone who lets the light shine through him'.*

Saints are guided by the light of faith in the big and little decisions of life. For them their faith is not something which they practice for an hour on Sunday and then forget about for the rest of the week. For the saints, God is part of their everyday lives. It informs all they do and are.

Last night was 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 delight in dressing up for the occasion, I don't think it's clever on Halloween to send them depicted as Devils or Vampires especially if they know little about the saints. That would be resurrecting its pagan origins. For those who don't honour the saints the Eve can become hollow rather than hallow. It's like celebrating New Year's Eve without a New Year's Day. Our Faith forces us to combat the dark forces of this world which will include shady areas in our lives. From reading the lives of the saints we see where they were painfully aware of their own sins and weaknesses and never pretended they were otherwise. They were real men and woman often plagued by temptations, just like us. But they never gave up the struggle.

We should become familiar with the lives of at least the more prominent saints. They 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 forbidding stoical 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 end of summertime. But the saints do not walk in darkness but follow Jesus, the Light of the World whom they long to see face to face eternally in beatific vision of heaven.