

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 of the heavens to the other. After moments of reflection he suddenly looked up to his father and said: 'Daddy, I was just thinking, if the outside of heaven is so beautiful, how wonderful the inside must be'.

But it is by the way we live our lives on this side that our fate on the other side is decided. 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 pencilled in for 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.

Last night was Halloween. In pagan times it was regarded as a night of fear when demons roamed around to welcome the winter darkness. I know they'll be restricted this year but I think it's unwise to send children out depicted as Devils or Vampires especially if they are unfamiliar with the saints who as Scripture says 'had nothing to do with the futile works of darkness'. That would be resurrecting the feast's pagan origins - more 'halloween' than 'halloween'. It would be like celebrating Christmas purely as a winter festival with no reference to our Saviour's birth. How sad that would be.

Our Faith forces us to combat the dark forces of this world which will include shady areas in our own lives as well. The saints were painfully aware of their own weaknesses and never pretended to be something they weren't. They were no strangers to temptation but they never gave up their efforts to

grow closer to Christ.

The saints are our heroes. We can't but be inspired by their lives of faith. Instead of reading Harry Potter books, which have some dark unsavoury themes for kids, bordering on the occult, they should be encouraged to become familiar with the lives of the saints instead. Why not have it on your Christmas present list. As a young man the great St Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, was converted reading the lives of the saints whilst recovering from a war wound.

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 person he is sometimes portrayed as. Sainthood and sadness simply don't mix.

The demons of Halloween are depicted as welcoming the darkness characterised by the onset of winter. But the saints adhered to Jesus, the Light of the World whom they now behold in glory.