

Homily for All Saints

(children)

Today we celebrate the feast of all saints. During weekdays throughout the year, the church celebrates and remembers special saints who are now in Heaven. Can we name a few of them? These people have been declared by the church to be saints because everyone knew that when they were alive they lived very good lives and were special friends of Jesus. If they did anything naughty they would always say sorry to Jesus. Jesus would always forgive them.

This is not to say that these special people are the only ones who are in Heaven. On the contrary, St. Paul, in many of his letters in the Bible calls the 'ordinary' Christians, like ourselves, 'saints. So in the early church anyone who believed in Jesus and tried their best to live and love like Him was automatically called a saint. It was only much later that the church began to apply the term 'Saint' solely to those who had died but who lived especially good lives while they lived. To use football terms they are in the Premier Division whereas most of the rest of us end up in the First Division or even Second as far as Sainthood is concerned. But God wants all of us to be saints whatever division we're in.

Today we remember with joy all those who have entered Heaven before us – many, I'm sure from our own families. You might remember say a nan-nan or a grand dad or great grandparents whom you have fond memories of who have passed away but who were very good to you while they were alive and you still miss them very much. You cried a lot when they died. They are surely in Heaven. Therefore we live in hope

that all our ancestors are in Heaven through the goodness of God. We have no reason to fear them for they love us and wish us well in everything we do. If they were especially close to us while on Earth they are even closer to us in Heaven. We should ask them to help us and to pray to God for us. We should look forward to the day when we will meet them again in Heaven just as they look forward to meeting us. What a happy meeting that will be.

HALLOWEEN

The day before All Saints is called Halloween - the Eve of All Saints, but that is the only Christian element in it. All the rest that accompanies Halloween is of pagan origin so it goes back to the time before Christianity. It was a pagan Celtic feast. They believed that after sunset on Halloween, the spirits of the dead and evil spirits roamed the skies seeking to harm humans, especially if the dead had been harmed by them. For protection people disguised themselves by dressing up in costumes and carried lights inside in turnips. In order to counteract the Pagan feast, the Catholic Church placed the feast of All Saints on November 1st.

Children have fun on Halloween now but it would be a pity if children did not know the Christian element of this feast - the feast of All Saints. So if your children are celebrating Halloween and know nothing about All Saints, please explain All Saints to them. I don't think it's right on Halloween to send out our children as Devils or Vampires. That would be resurrecting its pagan origins. For those who don't value the saints the Eve has become hollow rather than hallow. We are Christians, so let us not celebrate as pagans. The Church has tried to turn a pagan celebration into a Christian celebration. Is the reverse

happening today? As believers, it's up to us to make sure it doesn't.