Catholic Answers to Your Halloween Questions

by CHRISTINA MEAD
“Is Halloween an evil holiday?”

Nope! The word itself means “All Hallows’ Eve” ("hallow" is an old-fashioned word for holy) because it’s the night before the feast of All Saints. There’s a lot of research that’s been done on the origin of this holiday but I’ll save you the long version and just tell you: it was always our holiday.

The long history of this holiday is all over the board with which country and group of people were claiming it as their own. Even in the U.S. (a long time ago) there were some puritan wiccans who claimed Halloween as theirs. And then hollywood reinforced the whole demonic idea with a couple scary movies, and then bada-bing, bada-boom. Christians were scared that participating in Halloween festivities was bad for your soul. Which I can understand because there is a lot of emphasis on death and gore and scary things. All those skeletons!

You know the one place where I saw more skeletons than suburbia on Halloween? A Carthusian monastery. The monks use skulls to adorn their walls, ceilings, door frames, etc. They even used to greet each other with the phrase, “brother, remember your death.” These skulls aren’t morbid. They’re symbolic of those who have gone before us (all souls) and the destiny of our own bodies. It’s a reminder our bodies don’t last so we should work to discipline not comfort them.
And let’s not forget what we hear in church on Ash Wednesday: “Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return.” A.k.a. = death is coming.

These are good and necessary reminders that our current physical life is temporary. You don’t remember that you’re living for eternity if you avoid an acceptance of death and its symbols. If we avoid Halloween, we miss out on this rich, Catholic, symbolism of our death. It’s not an evil holiday, it’s a Christian one. Someone tell Party City.

“So is it okay for Catholics to celebrate Halloween?”

Sure! There’s nothing wrong with putting on a costume, trick-or-treating, and enjoying the company of your friends and family. Of course, some misled people take the holiday too far and make it more satanic than it should be. However, that’s not a reason for the rest of us Christians to be scared away.

When we decide to be afraid of the devil we give our power over to him. What message does it send the world if we, as Christians, are afraid to admit to the reality of evil? It sends the message that we’re not sure who wins this battle of good vs. evil.

But we are! We KNOW that God wins... that love triumphs over death, and that evil has no hold on us. Partaking in this holiday does not mean you’re opening yourself up to evil. I think that on the contrary, it
means you’re claiming as your own the victory of Christ on the cross. How much more Christian can you get?

“How can I not wear a “sexy” costume when all of my friends are?”

Don’t wear a sexy costume. It’s that simple. You can stand out. Be different. Accept the challenge to be more creative (http://lifeteen.com/blog/hot-halloween-costumes-lets-face-modest-hottest/). Show up as a POP-TART in a room full of mini-skirted pirates, nurses, and dudes who wear more clothing to the beach.

Is choosing virtue (like modesty) ever going to be easy this side of heaven? No. Are Christians called to follow the crowd? No. See Romans 12:2 (http://usccb.org/bible/romans/2).

True friends won’t judge you or be offended by your choice in costume. Just because you decide to wear an appropriate costume, that doesn’t mean you’re judging those around you.
And to be totally honest, most people of the opposite sex will appreciate it because they can have fun around you without worrying about where their eyes wander to. Plus having a debate about the best flavor of pop-tart (cookie dough, duh) is way better than being objectified (http://lifeteen.com/blog/an-open-letter-to-my-sisters-this-halloween/).

“How much candy can I eat Halloween night?”

Enough to treat yourself, but not so much that your body tricks you into sleeping in and missing Mass the next day.

November 1st is the Solemnity of All Saints, so get to Church and give praise to the God who saved you from death and stretched out His arms on the cross to hold evil at bay.

Want more on this topic? Check out these other resources!
• “It’s Time for Catholics to Embrace Halloween” (http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/its-time-for-catholics-to-embrace-halloween/2133/)
• “The Catholic Origins of Halloween” (http://ucatholic.com/blog/the-catholic-origins-of-halloween/)
• “Halloween Dos and Don’ts” (http://www.patheos.com/blogs/moniqueocampowrites/2015/10/27/halloween-dos-and-donts/?ref_widget=trending&ref_blog=standingonmyhead&ref_post=the-vicar-on-lady-bishops)

About the Author
I'm just striving for sainthood through lots of imperfect ways. I daydream about heaven, where I want to be the patron saint of lifeguards. I think I might paint my nails just so I can pick it off. I wrote a book about Mary and what she taught us about being a Catholic girl. It's called "That One Girl" and I think you'd like it! Follow me on Twitter @christinamead.
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