



Catholic Considerations for Our Earthly Passing

Catholics know earthly death is not the end, but rather the door through which we must pass to gain eternal life. Because of our belief and hope in the Resurrection, we can face death not with fear, but with preparation. Although certainly not comprehensive, the following considerations are provided as starting points for understanding and preparing for this transition, whether it is imminent or not.

Now and at the Hour of our Death

We prepare for eternal life by choosing to love and follow God now, in our daily lives and decisions. For example, through prayer and regular reception of the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist, we obtain grace to live in ever-deeper communion with God and with one another in lives of faith, charity, and justice. We ask for Our Blessed Mother's help now, and we entrust ourselves to her further as we "surrender 'the hour of our death' wholly to her care."

Forming Our Consciences

Our journey with Christ naturally includes equipping our consciences to make morally good judgments and acting accordingly. Learning about the dignity of human life and the indispensable respect for it, as well as applicable principles for medical care, is particularly important in preparing for our eventual passing.

Some bishops offer guides applying moral principles to local legal options. Parish and online resources are also widely available for careful and prayerful study, and the Ethical and Religious Directives from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops give direction for health care services to those who are seriously ill or dying.

A Note on General Principles

No summary can substitute for thorough catechesis, but some general principles are clear. We are entrusted by God with the gift of life, and in response, we care for our lives and health in obedience and gratitude to our Creator. This obliges us to make use of appropriate, effective medical care. However, even effective treatments may at times impose such a great burden that we, in good conscience, may forgo or discontinue them. This applies even to life-sustaining treatments. Of course, nothing should be done or deliberately omitted to hasten death.

The Church affirms the inviolable dignity of every person, regardless of the duration or extent of the person's incapacity or dependency. Nothing diminishes the unchangeable dignity and sanctity of a person's life, or the obligation to protect and care for it. In principle, assisted feeding and hydration should be provided unless it cannot sustain life or is unduly burdensome to the patient, or if death is imminent whether it is provided or not.



Name

Home Phone

Work Phone

Email Address

- I would simply like to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- I desire to prepare for my Baptism into Christianity.
- I've been Baptized as a Christian and now desire to join in Catholic Communion.
- I'm non-Catholic, but married to a Catholic, and now wish to join the Catholic Church.
- I'm Catholic and I would like to complete my initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating Confirmation and/or Communion.
- I'm Baptized Catholic and would like to learn more about my faith and how to practice it.
- I want to propose someone for Catholic Church membership and offer to serve as their sponsor.
- I would be willing to help with an R.C.I.A. program.
- I have other needs, requests, and questions. Please contact me.

Return this to the Parish Rectory or place it in the Collection basket.

CATHOLIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUR EARTHLY PASSING

Continued from page 1

Moreover, no one should choose suicide, nor counsel or assist another to take his or her own life.

Discerning Treatment Options

Judging the effect and burden of treatments can be difficult, especially as death draws near. To understand health facts and treatment options, we need professional medical advice. To understand Catholic moral teaching, we need to consult Church teaching and those who can faithfully explain it.

Speaking with Loved Ones

After informing our consciences, we need to inform our families. If we are unable to make decisions, they most often have legal authority to make surrogate decisions on our behalf. Or we may designate a health care agent by a durable power of attorney.

Though it is often helpful to also have written, signed documentation, no living will “check box” can ever replace clear conversations about our faith-guided principles. The best option is to choose an agent who will make medical decisions on our behalf in accord with our Catholic faith and Church teaching.

We should also inform family of our pastoral care preferences, and make clear that after death, we desire prayer, funeral rites, and Christian burial.

Accompaniment before and after Death

Those who are sick should not be alone, as multiple popes have reminded us in messages for the annual World Day of the Sick. Patients who have serious or life-threatening illnesses, as well as their families, can be provided with physical, psychological, and spiritual care through team-based palliative care. Hospice care can provide similar integrated care for those nearing death and for their families.

Pastoral care is integral to both palliative and hospice care, and includes making available the Eucharist, Confession, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum. It also includes supportive prayer and support for decision makers. It may be helpful to familiarize ourselves with local services available in preparation for our own passing or that of loved ones.

Even after death, accompaniment continues. Our prayers can help those who are being purified in Purgatory, so it is a spiritual work of mercy to pray for those who have died.

Hope in the Resurrection

Those who die in God’s grace and friendship live forever with Christ. Heaven is not an abstract idea, but a true and lasting relationship with God that is beyond all earthly description and understanding. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and everlasting life by preparing now, in hope, for our passage from this life into eternal life. We need not fear. Christ is with us.

Prepared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Share the Bounty With a Family in Need

Our St. Vincent de Paul Thanksgiving Food Drive is as easy as 1-2-3 ...

1. Pick up a box at one of the masses this weekend, Oct. 27th-28th, or next, Nov. 3rd-4th.
2. Take home the box and fill it with the groceries listed inside (about \$30 worth of Kroger-brand items.)
3. Return it to the church or rectory by November 11th.

All Things Considered

The XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops closes in Rome today. We should shortly begin seeing documents and pastoral suggestions that stem from this important meeting.

The theme of the synod was: **Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment.** The Holy Father said the theme is an “expression of the Church’s pastoral concern for the young.” Also, the theme is a natural follow-up to the Pope’s prior synod on the family and the document to come out of the last Synod which he called: *Amoris Laetitia*.

In the words of the Holy Father, the synod seeks to find ways of “accompany young people on their way of life towards maturity so that, through a process of discernment, they can discover their life project and realize it with joy, opening the encounter with God and with men, and actively participating in the building up of the Church and society.”

To catch up on the working of the Synod and to find the testimonies and reports already in circulation, log onto www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en.html

✠✠✠

This has been an extraordinarily expensive time for the parish as we catch up on long-delayed repair items. While we were paying off our building loan, we did not have much surplus capital to tackle projects, and a lot of maintenance items went unattended. But starting a year ago, we started to catch up with these deferred projects. Last fall, we spent \$45,900 to repair masonry on the east and west transepts. In the spring we spent \$30,500 to do tuck-pointing on the main facade of the church. \$50,000 was the cost of the repairs to the plaza, and \$14,200 was the cost of repairs


to the church air conditioning system this summer. We are spending \$22,000 in installing a new phone/data system in the offices. And you can see with the presence of the scaffolding in the church over the past two months, we are repairing the painting and decorative plaster work that was damaged as a result of delayed repairs. There were cosmetic repairs done to the wooden church doors as well as some corrective work on the bracing of the stained glass while the scaffolding was in place. Some of these repairs were budgeted and planned, some were not. We now have had to dip into our meager savings to pay for the most recent work – and pray that no other major systems fail or that we don’t get hit with excessive snow and ice costs as we did last year when we spent \$40,000 on that line item alone.

I don’t want to whine too much here, but it concerns me that while everyone appreciates the repairs, there does not seem to be an up-

tick in parishioner generosity in covering the costs. The last thing I want to get into is another building fund campaign. I think you will agree. But honestly, folks, you can’t for a second believe that we are operating this behemoth of a parish complex on the chronically low weekly envelope donations that trickle in. Since Easter, we have only hit the \$10,100 weekly budget target *two* times, and that included weekends when we were packed. Yes, as I reported in the end of the Fiscal Year Report last September, we experienced a hefty Christmas collection in 2017, but the budget is predicated not only on a great end of the year collection, it is also built on a week-to-week subsistence number of \$10,100.

Re-examine your weekly giving habits. Is it time you gave St. Ambrose a raise? It might be a good idea to set up an automatic weekly or monthly deduction though Christian Financial – or use the Givelify app on your cell phone.

TRP



MEMENTO MORI

These women and men have died and were buried from our parish since we last celebrated the Feast of All Saints. Please remember them in your prayers.

+ Leona Saunders + Brooks Jarvis + Ilene Moses
 + Marian Maher + Jeffrey Stepanski + Fred Whaley
 + Lawrence Garcia + Merrie Lynn Ruzzin
 + William Grogan + Annie Krueger + Judith Johnson
 + James Leamon + Paul Sulek + Mary Thomas
 + Liesa Ann Robertson + Camille Raffa-Dietz
 + Frank Delisi + John Charles Evans + Anne Diehl
 + Frieda Johnston + Jemima O’Neill
 + Ernest DuMouchelle + Maria Chinchilla
 + Jemar Harville, Jr.

November 1st

November 1st is All Saints Day, which this year falls on a Thursday.

It is a Holy Day of Obligation for U.S. Catholics. There will be a morning mass at 10:00 a.m. and an evening mass at 7:00 p.m. where we will remember in a special way those who have died and were buried from our parish in the past twelve months.

There will be a candle-lighting memorial calling out each of the deceased by name. We extend the invitation to all our parishioners to come and pray for the beloved dead in their own families at that Mass.



The Buzz

As we wind up the month of October this week, nature in our part of the Northern Hemisphere treats us with a variety of opportunities to reflect on deeper meanings of life. The growing darkness of the days as well as the chill in the air combine with falling leaves to confront us with the transitions that lead from life to death – but not before gracing us with the glorious explosion of color that is a gift to us from autumn in Michigan.

If we understood all this with the simple, shortsighted vision of immediate experience, we could very easily get really bummed-out. If fall was “the end”, depression and despair could logically follow. However, we do take for granted that spring will come again, and in the meantime, we can even find ways to appreciate, maybe also enjoy, winter. Past experience and collective wisdom keep us from being tricked by darkness and apparent death. They provide us with a necessary farsighted perspective to face the future with hope in renewed life.

This week, our faith treats us to some opportunities to “see” deeper and farther than others, and thus be a joy-filled people of eternal hope. Today’s Gospel passage from the Liturgy isn’t just about a miracle Jesus did for Bartimaeus. We too are asked to confront any area of depressing blindness in our hearts. Do we then really believe the Lord can heal us? What would be our answer if He asked us, as He did Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” And IF you got what you asked for, what would you do next? Would it match Bartimaeus?



I sometimes think that nostalgic and negative reflections on these questions have intertwined with dark and gloomy clouds that have overshadowed our nation, our hemisphere and world in recent times. In just over a week, we will have midterm elections in our country. Have the campaigns, the speeches and the ads helped you to see issues and candidates more clearly? What will make our nation – and/or Church – great again?! Were either really greater before? Why, or why not? Important questions that need a lot more prayer and consideration marked by a lot more light and a lot less heat than they have received for months.



Our children and their religious education classes with today’s pumpkin homilies are an annual treat that helps prepare us for Thursday’s Holy Day of All Saints. This feast is all about hope as we see realities that never die but are brought to fulfillment forever. And this is meant for everyone, not just the great and obvious heroes and heroines of faith. Here are the saints that the children are presenting: Grade K: St. Blase, patron of people with throat ailments; Grade 1: St. Lucy, patron of people with eye disease; Grade 2: St. Bernadette, patron of those with asthma; Grade 3: St. Jude Thaddeus, patron of desperate situations; Grade 4: St. Anthony of Padua, patron of lost items; Grade 5, St. Juan Diego, patron of the disenfranchised; Grade 6: St. Josephine Bakhita, patron against racial discrimination; Grade 7: St. Giles, patron of people with disabilities; Grade 8: St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, patron of people with heart disease; Grade 9: St. Agatha, patron of people with breast cancer. Following mass you can place a contribution in the container in front of the saint of your choice. That donation will go to our St. Vincent dePaul Society.



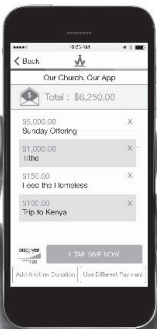
There are only four Sundays left in the Liturgical year. On the last one, November 25th, the Solemnity of Jesus Christ the King of the Universe, the Archdiocese annually celebrates the Sacrament of Confirmation for adults and older teens at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. If you or someone you know has never been confirmed and would like to, contact me right away to see about including you in this Liturgy. The RCIA preparation process at St. Ambrose is very flexible and inclusive. No cost; no obligation. Let’s “see” together whether this is just the way the Lord is calling you to follow Him at this stage of your life. It is never too early; it is never too late. In God’s good time, it is always the right time! Call me anytime at (313) 332-5631.

Chuck Dropiewski

Givelify

Tap. Give. Done.

- Donations to our church have never been so easy!
- Give tithes and offerings from your smartphone
- Donate anytime, anywhere
- Track your donations
- Make us your home church on Givelify
- Free to download and use



givelify.com/app



Journey of Hope

The journey of hope requires turning our negative attitude into a positive/good attitude. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our thoughts could turn into bad attitudes. We understand a negative attitude is not simply an indication that God is not with us. Rather, it simply shows that God's presence has not really transformed our interior understanding. Oftentimes we are dominated with self-interest and self-centeredness which might reduce our fruitful thinking. Therefore, we need to pray to the Holy Spirit to alert us to turn our negative attitude into a good and mindful attitude. We might experience a bad attitude when we feel upset because someone asks for assistance, or things are not going the way we wanted and we turn him/her down without any clear reason. We can become very concerned only about our problem – concerned about ourselves with anxiety that wears us down. In this case, we are definitely feeding on the pride of ambition: to place ourselves above others. This becomes a desire for self-recognition and one's own importance. Since negative attitudes are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we are not supposed to allow them to mislead the activities of our graces.

In this regard, we need to recognize and discern this truth, and consciously make efforts to avoid the negative approach, which slowly infests our spirits. Consequently, the goal of the Christian life is to listen and respond to God's Spirit working in our hearts. Negative attitudes are not from the Holy Spirit. We should not give the enemy any permission to rule our behavior. If our Savior Jesus is offering himself for us daily, then why can't we share likewise with our neighbors? Jesus tells us that whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters we do it for Him. To serve God is to serve a neighbor in need. It is loving your neighbor.

This careful approach toward good attitudes of hope can liberate us from the chains of a negative attitude and free us to take courageous steps out of our comfort zone. A positive attitude would also draw us into a full restoration of a godly, healthy attitude of freedom as Christ's faithful servants. When the Holy Spirit transforms us, we are striving to serve Christ through our neighbors. This positive achievement is inspired by the Holy Spirit in us as we become compassionate Christ-like servants and embrace his freedom.

Having acknowledged that our courage, trust and hope in God come from the power of the Holy Spirit, we are then invited to allow God to transform us to become his true servants. We should be cautious against whatever tries to stir us into a negative attitude and to know that such are not from God. We should immediately turn our negative attitudes into something beautiful and embrace a relationship of love of neighbor. Instead of celebrating one's own pity-party, we should allow ourselves to be guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit to change our bad attitudes to an affectionate delightful hope.

Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM Cap.

First Friday Holy Hour

Deacon Kote-Witah will conduct a holy hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament this coming Friday following the 8:30 morning mass. It will conclude at 10:00 a.m. This is an extension of the First Friday Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To those who show him love and who make reparation for sins, our Lord made a great pledge through Sr. Margaret Mary Alacoque: *"I promise you in the unfathomable mercy of my heart that my omnipotent love will procure the grace of final penitence for all those who receive Communion on nine successive first Fridays of the month; they will not die in my disfavor, or without having received the sacraments, since my divine heart will be their sure refuge in the last moments of their life."* The entire purpose of this devotion is to draw a person closer to the heart of Christ. If a person fulfills these obligations with sincere faith, it is natural for him or her to be closer to God and better prepared for death.



Pasta for the Poor

The St. Vincent De Paul Society Spaghetti Dinner is scheduled for Friday, November 16th, from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., in the ARK. Dinner includes all-you-can-eat choice of pasta and sauces, garlic bread, salad, dessert and coffee.

Prices are: adults: \$15, children (6-12) \$6, and children (5 and under) free. Tickets are available in the back of church after the Masses on the weekends of November 3-4 and November 10-11. They can also be purchased at the door. We need donations of desserts from commercially licensed kitchens-bakeries. You can sign up for this at the back of church on the same weekends.

The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the St. Ambrose Catholic Community Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc

Assistant: Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM, Cap

Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski

Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums

Minister of Music: Dr. Norah Duncan IV

Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 332-5633

Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

Monday, October 29

8:30 - Morning Prayer

Tuesday, October 30

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Emma Schneedecker

Wednesday, October 31

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer

Thursday, November 1

All Saints Day

10:00 a.m. - Holyday Mass

7:00 p.m. - Holyday Mass

Friday, November 2

All Souls' Day

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Robert Convery;

Carter Billiu, Poor Souls in Purgatory

9:00 - 10:00 a.m. First Friday Holy Hour

Saturday, November 3

1:30 - Wedding -

Mollie Barron & James Mackinnon

4:00 p.m. - Mass - For All People

Sunday, November 4

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. - For All People

11:15 a.m. - For All People

Scriptures for the 30th Week of Ordinary Time

Monday, October 29

- Eph 4:32-5: 8
- Ps 1: 1-4, 6
- Lk 13: 10-17

Tuesday, October 30

- Eph 5: 21-33
or 122; Eph 5: 2a, 25-32
- Ps 128: 1-5
- Lk 13: 18-21

Wednesday, October 31

- Eph 6: 1-9
- Ps 145: 10-14
- Lk 13: 22-30

Thursday, November 1

- Rv 7: 2-4, 9-14
- 1 Jn 3: 1-3
- Mt 5: 1-12a

Friday, November 2

- Wis 3: 1-9
- Rom 5: 5-11 or Rom 6: 3-9
- Jn 6: 37-40

Saturday, November 3

- Phil 1: 18b-26
- Ps 42: 2-3, 5cdef
- Lk 14: 1: 7-11

Sunday, November 4

- Dt 6: 2-6
- Heb 7: 23-28
- Mk 12: 28b-34

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time November 3rd and November 4th

4:00 p.m. – Saturday – Celebrant: Fr. Pelc **Lector:** Cathy McPherson
Eucharistic Ministers: Beverly Bennert, Della Cimini, Matthew Strong
Altar Servers: Daniel & Eleanor Bernas

8:30 a.m. – Sunday – Celebrant: Fr. Bede **Lector:** Bob Gatzke
Eucharistic Ministers: Colleen Drummond, Colleen Gatzke,
Joan Jackson, Maggie Jackson, Bob Jogan, Chris Walsh
Altar Servers: Nicholas, Margaret, & Meredith Kramer

11:15 a.m. - Celebrant: Fr. Bede **Lector:** Leslie Leitch
Eucharistic Ministers: Lupe Davila, Pat & Michael Mocerri,
Sue & Roger Playwin, Janis Ramsey, Patty Yaden
Altar Servers: Liam O'Byrne

Your Envelope Speaks . . . the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Sunday, October 21, 2018

in envelopes we received \$4,875.00
in the loose collection \$654.00
in electronic donations \$1,390.00
for a total of..... **\$6,919.00**

Under budget for the week..... **\$3,181.00**

Number of envelopes mailed 900

Number of envelopes used..... 119

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.” MARK 10:52

Faith is believing in something even though you may not be able to see it. Many people think that miracles don't happen anymore. But, if you focus on the positive, not the negative, focus on your blessings instead of your hardships, miracles will seem common and you will see God's active presence in your daily life.

Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Buccer, Emilie Kasper, Arthur Stoyshin, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O'Brien, Martha Luna, Dan Urbiel, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Darby O'Toole, Frank Gregory, Josephine DeCastris, Alex Billiu, Albina Checki and Gladys Bogos.

Our Dead

On October 26th, a funeral liturgy was celebrated for long-time parishioner, **Maria Chinchilla**, 97.

Maria was born in San Jose, Costa Rica and at her passing was a resident of Harper Woods. For many years she lived on the east side of Detroit with her daughter, Norma. Maria enjoyed cooking and showed her love of family by cooking big family meals. She was interested in gardening and her vegetable garden could feed the neighborhood.

Maria was predeceased by her son, Rony, and is survived by her children, Gloria, Tammy, Glenn and Norma. She will be missed by her 11 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren, as well as the rest of her family and friends.

Please remember Maria in your prayers.

Vincentian Reflection

Jesus asks Bartimaeus: “What do you want me to do for you?” And he answers, “Master, I want to see.” Let us ask Jesus for the grace to “see” our brothers and sisters who are living in poverty, who are lonely and feeling hopeless. This month, through your gifts, the St. Vincent de Paul Conference here at St. Ambrose was able to bring God's love and mercy to 50 families, by providing food, clothing, furniture and household items, and assistance with utility, rent and transportation needs. God bless you for your help in making this possible.



Join us on Facebook
facebook.com/stambroseparish

Why Catholics Should Embrace Halloween

Halloween, the Evening of All Hallows, was once a time for Christians to mock the devil by reveling in the triumph of Jesus Christ over evil and death. That sound you now hear every October 31 is the devil mocking us. It seems some Christians, displaying a Grinch-ish dislike of the simple joys of dress-up and candy consumption, have literally demonized the traditional observation of Halloween as pagan—and worse.

Many Christians through the centuries have entertained an unhealthy fear (as distinguished from a healthy fear) of the devil. Dressing children in “scary” costumes for the amusement of the neighbors can defang evil by demonstrating that innocence is adorable and evil is but a damned parasite on all that is good and noble. But in a hyper-scrupulous environment, it can be difficult for Christians to appreciate that there is spiritual value in such a mockery of evil – or even that it is mockery of evil and not participation in it.

Halloween is a holiday Catholics should embrace in its original form. In understanding that form, it is helpful to consider a little history.

On May 13, around A.D. 610, Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Roman Pantheon to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to all Christian martyrs and set aside the day in their honor. Perhaps by evangelistic design, that date coincided with the *Lemuria* festival, a pagan Roman celebration intended to satisfy the restless dead. A century later, this Day of All Saints was moved to November 1. “All Hallows,” “Hallowmas,” “Hallowtide,” and “Halloween” eventually joined the stable of popular designations for the time in the Church’s liturgical calendar when the Church commemorates its saints (or hallowed ones).

While no direct link to the Celtic festival of Samhain can be proven to have been intended by the Church’s choice of the November date to honor its saints, November 1 was providentially close to the change-of-season feast celebrated by pagan Celts in honor of their Druid “lord of the dead,” the god Samhain. The Celts’ preparations for physical survival during the coming winter season culminated with celebrations marking a time believed open to a special closeness between the natural and the supernatural – and, to the extent of the pagan Celts’ pre-Christian understanding, the preternatural – worlds.

Newly baptized Christians were not forbidden to carve gourds into lanterns, or to set out treats for the dearly departed. Realizing the missionary value of incorporating non-evil pagan folk practices into Christian customs, the Church allowed Christians to continue these old customs, seeing in them ways to pass on the Faith. If all this festivity and seasonal reflection got Christians to go to Mass for the feasts of All Saints and All Souls, and reminded them to set aside time to pray for their beloved dead, why raise hell over the idea that pagan ancestors may have done similar deeds for not altogether dissimilar reasons?

In the seventeenth century, all “popish” holidays were crushed when the Puritans ruled England and those areas in the American colonies where they settled. Christmas and Easter proved too important to the Christian liturgical year to be snuffed out permanently and were for the most part restored as Christian holy days. Halloween, on the other hand, never recovered. To this day, Christians from Fundamental Protestant to conservative Catholic remain at war over whether Halloween is a Christian holiday – and, if it is, to what extent Christians should celebrate it.

Nowadays, schools that won’t allow Christian students to form Bible study groups on campus or offer prayers at graduation ceremonies will listen closely to ill-informed Christian gripes that Halloween is an occasion for proselytism of witchcraft. (Halloween is a Christian holiday; Samhain was pulled from the dustbin of history by modern neo-pagan witches seeking to throw off the yoke of postmodern Christian culture.)

Evangelical Christians uncomfortable with saints needed to figure out how to appease their own kids’ demands to commemorate October 31 along with their friends. Recalling that Martin Luther tacked his 95 theses to protest indulgences to the door of the Wittenberg church on October 31, 1517 (and overlooking the fact that Luther chose that day because of its historic Christian connection to the saints), they decided to make Halloween a time to celebrate the Reformation.

All well and good – but commemorating ideas, however revolutionary, does not satisfy a sweet tooth. To address that need, some Protestant groups decided to host harvest festivals. It would be especially strange for Catholic families to replace Halloween festivities, whether saintly or secular, with a generic harvest festival created as a means of honoring the Reformation – a Christian rebellion against the Catholic Church.

Where do Catholic families go from here? The only mandate I can recommend is Christ’s signature admonition: “Be not afraid!” Whatever other plans you make for the holiday, do not neglect to teach your kids the “reason for the season.” Like Mardi Gras preceding Lent, Halloween ushers in a time of somber reflection – in this case the month of November, a time of spiritual preparation when the Church honors the saints and prays for holy souls. Traditionally, Catholic ethnic groups continue to keep alive pious folk Catholic customs to honor and pray for their deceased ancestors.

When the Grinch plotted how best to steal Christmas in Dr. Seuss’s holiday classic, he thought it would do to pilfer its trappings: the decorations, the food, the presents. Much to his dismay, the Who townfolk were unfazed by having their houses ransacked on Christmas Eve because the Grinch could not steal their thunder: their joy, with which they sang loudly enough to swell even the Grinch’s shriveled heart. They also had something else the Grinch realized too late he could not steal: Christmas. “Somehow or other, it came just the same!”

So it can be for Halloween. The decorations, the costumes, the games, the candy – they can add enjoyment to the celebration, yet they are but trappings. The true joy of the holiday is Christ’s victory over death, his triumph over evil, and the invitation he offers us to share in that victory and in that triumph. If we take back Halloween as a Christian holiday, if we are unafraid to confront the principalities and powers that struggle to wrest away our victory and our triumph in Christ, then those who seek to do so will realize that they cannot steal our Halloween joy.

Never forget that the *raison d’être* of Halloween is holy mockery of the devil. As St. Thomas More observed of the devil, “The proud spirit cannot endure to be mocked.”

By Michelle Arnold for Catholic Answers.

Access the full article at www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/why-catholics-should-embrace-halloween