

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Sweets and Saints

When I was growing up, this last week in October signified only one thing: Halloween.

Since I attended Catholic school, that meant a holiday the day after, November 1, for the feast of All Saints.

I don't have to tell you which of those two days loomed largest in my young consciousness.

I would spend weeks trying to figure out what to wear for trick-or-treating. I remember one year when my mother made me a cape to wear as Dracula. I also remember being annoyed when the weather was too cold, and my mother made me wear a heavy winter coat over my costume.

What was the point of looking like Dracula if you had mittens clipped to your sleeves?

But I remember other things, too: the smell of dead wet leaves, the chewy taste of candy corn, and the neighbors who thought they were doing you a favor by giving you pennies instead of caramels.

And then, of course, there was the long night of indulgence: spilling the candy onto the floor and sifting through it and popping a malt ball into your mouth, like Caligula eating a grape.

Now, four decades later, I don't quite have the stomach for that kind of living. (Though I confess I still have a soft spot in my heart for candy corn.) My thoughts now turn increasingly away from the chocolate decadence of Halloween night, and toward the psalms and candles of the morning after.

The Church—either out of wisdom or pragmatism—has given us this one day, November 1, to remember *all* the saints, those we know well and, especially, those we don't. (St. Thecla, anyone?)

In our own church, here in Queens, we are surrounded by saints. Stephen looms on a north window, Agnes to the south. Jude and Anthony watch from the back. Others gaze down on us from their permanent shrines in stained glass. If you need any insight into the “communion of saints” with whom we share our faith, just look around. They are with us every day.

Some, of course, aren't etched in glass. They are flesh and blood, seated beside us and before us, in the pews and on the trains. They are at the deli, and the newsstand. They bag groceries at Key Food. They teach children, drive buses, clean teeth, cut hair. They are devoted to God, and to others, in ways that brighten a sad and worried world. Our planet is full of saints, if only we will look for them.

In fact, a sharp-eyed Christian could collect saints this week the way children collect candy in plastic pumpkins.

Try it. Watch for them. Look with the eye, and with the heart. You may see the saints we so often miss. Be grateful for them, and carry them with you, nestled in prayer instead of a fake pumpkin.

They are God's treats to us, and will last long after the last of the candy corn is gone.

Best of all: They won't cause cavities.



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