
Holy Hacks: October 25, 2019

By the Rev. Julia Mitchener

A recent post on a popular Facebook page asked its followers about Halloween: *Do you celebrate it or not?* For me, this is a non-starter. I love pretty much everything about Halloween—the costumes, the decorations, the wax lips; the vintage TV specials, the spaghetti masquerading as slimy intestines at the school haunted house, the excitement on the faces of trick-or-treaters, the fact that I gave birth to two kids who don't like peanut butter and chocolate and dump all the Reese's they collect into a big bowl for me (#winning) . . . I could go on and on.

Not all Christians are as enthusiastic about October 31. Some churches teach that Halloween is a holiday to avoid, that it is somehow “demonic” and opposed to the teachings of Jesus.

Our own Anglican/Episcopal tradition offers a different take. Halloween is “All Hallows’ Eve,” the day that anticipates the Feast of All Saints and reminds us that we are surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses” who cheer us on in life as we encounter things that are scary and hard.

Besides the fact that Halloween is a day linked to a major Christian festival and is generally a whole lot of fun, there are other positives to encouraging children take part in it. For starters, Halloween can help our kids overcome their fears, step by step, as they are ready. The first year my husband donned his infamous “Chucky” mask to greet trick-or-treaters, my then three-year-old screamed in terror and bolted, not stopping until she reached the end of our driveway. A couple of Octobers later, she decided she wanted to wear the mask herself—along with her Princess Elsa costume.



Halloween also gives children a chance to begin to confront the reality that there is darkness, pain, and ill will in our world. The struggle between good and evil represented by my daughter's Elsa-Chucky

costume mashup is a struggle that plays itself out daily across the globe. Whether it's the evils of racism, greed, and indifference to suffering and oppression or the horrors of warfare, disease and famine, the battle between the power of life and the power of death is real. The great Good News of our faith, though, is that no matter how fierce this battle becomes, we do not have to tremble over its ultimate outcome. There is a reason why some of the words Jesus speaks most frequently in the Gospels are "Do not be afraid." Regardless of what terrors we encounter in life, we can meet them with courage and hope, for in Jesus, God has already won the victory over death and destruction. The answer to the prayer we chant at the Cathedral during our annual Halloween Costume Blessing—"From ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord deliver us!"—the answer to this prayer has already been given, definitively. Our Christian conviction is that God will deliver us, God *has* delivered us. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than death, victory is ours, victory is ours, through Him who loves us."

I wish you all a happy and hopeful All Hallows' Eve.

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