

# Trick or Treat?

## Do you know why you do what you do on Halloween?



Where did this whole idea come from? It has something to do with the “eve of all Hallows”—whatever that is, right? But why the candy and costumes? Let’s start with Halloween. What is Halloween, or All Hallows Eve? Just as we pray in the Lord’s prayer, “Hallowed be thy name...,” “hallows” means holy ones, or put more simply, the Saints. And we know what “eve” means, it’s the evening before.

All Hallows Eve, or the Eve of All Saints Day is a day when we prepare to celebrate the feast of All Saints, but what do we do to prepare? What is there to prepare for? November 1<sup>st</sup> has traditionally been All Saints Day, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> is All Souls Day. On these days, we typically pray for and honor the departed souls of those who have come before us. Even now, in some places, All Saints Day is when they pray for the Saints and departed Children, and All Souls Day is a day to pray for everyone else, known or unknown, who have departed this life.

So, people would prepare for these days of prayer by collecting a list of all of the departed souls they knew, recent deaths as well as ancestors. People would also pray for their neighbors’ departed relatives, and keep them in their devotions on these special days.

But what does this have to do with putting on a costume and going door-to-door asking for candy? Well, in preparation for gathering those names we just mentioned, and to teach their children how to begin/maintain this devotion, people would send their children door-to-door to ask their neighbors for the names of *their* departed relatives. And the children’s reward for their prayers was a small cake or pastry, often called a “soul-cake,” given in trade for a prayer for a departed soul—one cake for one prayer.

A custom also came along over the years where children would honor All Saints Day by dressing up as their favorite saint, so to learn more about those Christians that gave their lives to the service of the Lord, and to pattern their lives after the Saints. Somewhere along the line, these practices were combined, and we ended up with children dressing up as saints and going door-to-door asking for sweets and prayers.

Of course, like many other Christian days of devotion, All Saints Day was put in its current place on the last day of October to thwart the celebration at the end of the Pagan year, which was much like a New Year’s Eve celebration. Somewhere in this mix, we get the phrase “trick or treat?” as the pagans were reluctant to give up their holiday and participate in the Christian Holiday.

Naturally, time withers all kinds of things, and customs get lost in their public interpretations. So instead of seeing children dressed up as Saints such as, St. Laurence, St. John, or the Virgin Mary, we see St. Batman, St. Sponge-Bob, and St. Cat-in-the-Hat walk the streets asking for candy, and we give them no names to pray for.

So next Halloween, if you are able, or if you have the inclination, consider dressing your child as a Saint, or at least teach them to pray for the souls of your departed loved ones. The Saints pray for us daily, and we should return the favor! ***Also, if you don’t currently attend a church, you are invited to worship Saint Barnabas at 10 a.m. on Sunday.*** God is always calling us back home, and the Saints continue to pray for us to find and serve God as they did, whether or not we pray for them.

**HAPPY HALLOWEEN and HAPPY ALL SAINTS DAY!**



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