

## Q&A

***Q: Fr. Alex, I am a parent and have Christian friends who do not let their children celebrate Halloween ... trick-or-treating, parties, etc. I have other Christian friends who tell me not to worry? What's your take—how does the Church view Halloween?***

First of all, ask ten different priests and you'll get ten different answers. This is where our Orthodox flexibility and consideration of time and circumstance come in. First of all, to know the history of Halloween is to know that it obviously has origins in pagan practice, some pretty dark European folklore, and a host of other sometimes unnerving realities. If you check out the "Halloween History" article on the Family Page "Living the Life" section, you'll find some hair-raising details and curiosities. But the reality is that the connection between these "origins" and the practice of "Trick-or-Treat," and the context of our modern Halloween celebrations, is pretty weak. In other words, when our children are excited to dress up as a little ghost, pumpkin or black cat, it is very doubtful they're plotting to offer dark sacrifices to mysterious Keltic gods. They simply think it's fun to dress up, get candy and hear a good spooky story. The key with items like this is very much in the intention of what is being done, practiced, etc. In fact, maybe the biggest sin of Halloween is how much hard-earned money we spend on it.

So rather than forbid involvement, and fight the popularity of October 31st, I usually encourage a creative approach. Ask your children if they'd like to dress up as saints (St. George and Demetrios would make fun, rugged, and adventurous costumes!) for the big night; use the occasion of "Trick-or-Treat" to welcome new neighbors with some home-made goodies, illustrating the beautiful practice of Christian hospitality to your little ones; use this time of year to remind your children of how they "put on Christ" (like a costume) at Baptism; throw a "Harvest Party" at your Church, with participants dressing as saints and angels; ask your priest to speak to your children about his Sunday "costume"—the vestments he wears during the Divine Liturgy!

These are a few ideas, and there are many more. Ultimately, Mom and Dad need to make a decision they're comfortable with. I think the key is making that decision, explaining it, and getting creative around it.