Local religious members talk conflict with Halloween

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Halloween and religion have a history of conflict, and some religious people to this day may object to parts of the holiday.

According to History.com, Halloween was a religious holiday that originated as a pagan celebration before it became a Christian holiday known as All Hallows Eve.

"It originated with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts," the website reads. "In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III designated November 1 as a time to honor all saints; soon, All Saints Day incorporated some of the traditions of Samhain. The evening before was known as All Hallows Eve, and later Halloween."

Today, it is still a religious celebration, but some say that it has become more commercialized in the United States.

"What we celebrate today is very very commercialized and it also does tend to emphasize certain things that I don't think would have been emphasized in earlier Halloweens. It has become very sexualized, very dark. I don't think that aspect of necessarily is good," said Father Bryce Sibley, the Pastor in Chapel at Our Lady of Wisdom Catholic Church and Student Center.

Sibley said he thinks the current problems with Halloween originated with Protestant fundamentalists.

"The problem is the really Protestant attitude towards it. Most Catholics have no problem with Halloween, but it's the Protestant fundamentalist attitude that has a difficult time seeing how spiritual interacts with the goodness of the world," Sibley said. "I see a lot of fundamentalist ideas of all secular music is bad or all secular movies are bad; that's not going to be the Catholic perspective at all."

Jessica Trahan, the director of the Wesley United Campus Ministry at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, responded to this idea.

The interior of Our Lady of Wisdom Catholic Church, before 12 p.m. mass on Friday, Oct. 25, 2019.

"I think it's an interesting perspective," Trahan said. "I don't know if there's any one person or group to blame for good things going bad. I think that sometimes human nature takes over, and we get ourselves in a place that we didn't start."

Tim Maragos, a Deacon at Our Lady of Fatima Church, said that he thinks the holiday is no longer religious, but it isn't necessarily bad.

"The day has pretty much lost its religious connotations, even among Catholics, but the idea of children dressing up as ghosts and goblins should make us smile because they are mocking the evil that is personified in those fallen angels we call devils. As St. Thomas More once wrote, 'The proud Spirit cannot endure to be mocked,'" Maragos said.

Maragos also added how he celebrates Halloween with his family.

"My wife makes Halloween costumes for our four grandchildren, but my only role is to try to give more candy away to trick-or-treaters than I eat myself," he said.

Religious students also have ideas on what they believe Halloween should be.

"It's a fun, I guess, holiday for kids," Cedric Hyman, a non-denominational sophomore at UL Lafayette, said. "I'm not too sure of the religiousness behind it. I consider myself a religious person. I see, as long as you're not celebrating it for the wrong things, I don't see anything wrong with it, like Satanic reasons."

Another student, Hannah Cassano, said she disagrees with stereotypes surrounding witchcraft and the Wiccan faith.

"When people think of witchcraft, they think of cauldrons and mixing spells and cursing people and black magic when it's just crystallography, you know, like healing through crystals and meditation and incense, essential oils, things like that is technically, 'witchcraft,'" Cassano said.

"I do know people who are very deep into the wicca/black magic, but I wouldn't think of myself as a stereotypical witch, even though crystals and incense would all fall under that," Cassano added. "I guess technically I'm Wiccan, but it has a really bad rap. It's not the stereotypical like witchcraft that people think it is."

She then talked about how witches are represented in Halloween:

"I wouldn't say (the representation) is rude. It's all in good spirits. It's all in good fun, although I do think a lot of the high-brow of all witches being evil and bloodthirsty murderers is a bit dramatic," she said.