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Hallows for Today, Oct. 31

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A front-page article in *The New York Times* yesterday, Drop the Halloween Mask! You Might Scare Somebody, [1] lists the various costumes and props forbidden at school Halloween parties.

When I was in parochial school in the late 1940s and early '50s, I always dressed as a gypsy with big hoop earrings and lots of make-up, but today that would be considered an ethnic stereotype. The boys in my class dressed as hobos with dirty faces and bindles, but today that would be regarded as demeaning the homeless.

(There was quite a battle on the "Mad Men" message board about the symbolism of Don and Betty's children going trick-or-treating as a gypsy and a hobo, but I think it was just another touch of period realism by Matthew Weiner.)

The New York Times article said nothing about parochial schools. I wonder if kids who dress as saints for the Eve of All Hallows parties are allowed to carry the traditional symbols and instruments of martyrdom associated with them.

Today is the feast of St. Wolfgang of Ratisbon, [2] but a little boy intending to portray him should probably leave the axe [3] behind.

And no tongs for St. Agatha. No sword for St. Agnes. No hunched back for St. Alphonsus de Liguori. No tower for St. Barbara. No tanner's knife and human skin for St. Bartholomew. No cup of poison for St. Benedict. No axe for St. Boniface. No spiked wheel for St. Catherine of Alexandria. No noose for St. Charles Borromeo. No severed head for St. Dionysius. No sword for St. George. No eyeballs on a plate for St. Lucy. No arrows for St. Ursula. No stones for St. Stephen.

-- Submitted by Gerelyn Hollingsworth [4]

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[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/30/us/30costume.html?_r=1&hp=&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1256915192-4ZqThSznlRI944xzApeVQA
[2] http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15682b.htm
[3] http://www.weissesroessl.at/images/content/big/st_wolfgang.jpg
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