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Polish archbishop: Halloween festivities violate church teaching

Jonathan Luxmoore Catholic News Service | Oct. 30, 2013
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A Polish archbishop has cautioned that Halloween celebrations violate church teaching and urged Catholics not to take part "even in playful form."

"This is a fundamentally anti-Christian festival," said Archbishop Marek Jedraszewski of Lodz. "Parents and teachers should protect youngsters against its images of terror and dread, especially when many already associate it with the cult of Satan."

Polish Catholic leaders have been trying to foster alternatives to Halloween, which has been marked in Poland since the 1989 collapse of communist rule.

In a pastoral letter to his archdiocese, Jedraszewski said Poland was "already seeing a clear reversion in the Western world, as well as in Poland, to pagan practices." He said the Nov. 1 All Saints' Day and Nov. 2 All Souls' Day had "long traditions" in Poland and were worthy Christian occasions for "praising God and honoring those who came before."

"Introducing children, and sometimes adults, to Halloween practices is a violation of church teaching. Christians should not take part, even in playful form," he said.

He added that, instead of celebrating Halloween, local Catholics should commemorate up to 20,000 youngsters who died at the only Nazi concentration camp for children, which operated in Lodz from 1942 to 1945.

A Catholic presenter with Polish Radio, Malgorzata Glabisz-Pniewska, told Catholic News Service data suggested that Poles' interest in Halloween was now declining.

"Post-communist countries like ours went through a phase when everything from the West seemed better," she told Catholic News Service on Wednesday. "Many people dislike Halloween now, not because of any link with Satanism, but because it's an imported custom alien to our culture. It would be better if the church just left it to die naturally."

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