RUMBLINGS FROM THE BUNKER

## ***OF SPOOKS AND GHOULS AND THE HOLY GHOST!***

It seems this year more than ever Halloween has really taken off! I don't think I ever saw such an array of scary masks and houses decked with witches, skeletons and lanterns. I was reminded of Halloween at home. I remember my Mum scooping out the insides of the turnip and the little butts of candles placed in them. I remember my Dad fixing the spinning wheels to our front railing, twirling the sparklers in my tiny hand, and being nervous of the rockets in the milk bottles. I also remember diving for the apple in the basin of water, and hoping I would get the money or the ring in the barnbrack. I have been thinking this week about Halloween, and wondering why children enjoy it so much. Could it be that they are so carefree that fear is not real for them? Fear for them is thrill. Excitement. It's the chase, the close shave, the laughter and the premise that the scary stuff can do us no harm. Maybe it's the same reason that we adults grow away from Halloween. Is it that we have encountered sickness in ourselves and our loved ones? Is it that we have glimpsed death? Is it that fear is only too real in our lives, that we neither need, nor want, the fear-filled play of Halloween?

Of course with Halloween comes the dark evenings. It's a time for coughs and sneezes and worse still the dreaded flu, even with the flu injection! Where is that hot water bottle? Electric blankets and heavier duvets! Having said all that, there are lovely things about this time of year: the carpet of leaves in the park, the reds and browns of Autumn, and the cool crisp fresh air. With autumn comes thoughts of those we miss. It can be a lonely time. Yet there is something comforting, if not exactly cosy about it.

I think when it comes to matters of the Spirit we are quite impoverished. In one sense we are fascinated by the realm of the spiritual, but sadly we fail to see what is under our nose. Whilst we are intrigued with talk of spirits and ghosts, sadly we are uncomfortable talking about either the Evil Spirit or the Holy Spirit. I find when I speak of the Evil Spirit there are two extreme reactions: on one hand there are those who dismiss it's very existence, and on the other those who delight at the mention of it and think it is everywhere from the porridge to the steps on the pavement. Both are unhealthy. The way to get a balanced perspective on the Evil Spirit is to develop our understanding, and indeed our relationship, with the Holy Spirit. Do we believe that God's Holy Spirit is within us? Do we believe that what we formerly called the Holy Ghost, is the Holy Spirit, is the third person of the Holy Trinity? Do we believe in the Holy Breath of God? Do we believe that it was the movement of the Holy Spirit in the conclave that led to the election of Pope Leo? Do we really believe that we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation? Do we know what these gifts are? Wisdom, understanding, right judgement, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe in God's presence. What an armoury to empower us on our pilgrim way! Do we as people of faith believe that no spirit, no ghoul, no spook, no demon, singularly or collectively, will ever be any match, never mind be victor, over God's Holy Spirit?

Fraternally, JoeMcD 19. 10. 25