

Disneyland is a special place. Only more so, in my opinion, during the holidays.

There are lights and special presentations all over the park. At halloween, pumpkins with the expected faces of Mickey Mouse, Goofy and other Disney characters are strategically placed throughout the magic kingdom.

And of course there is the Haunted House which has a special place at Disneyland during the Halloween season. My wife taunted me to try to find all the hidden Mickeys on this ride. I didn't do so well.

As with most holiday seasons, there has been an evolution to Halloween. It is, of course, basically a religious holiday focused on the Holy Eve, that is, the vigil prior to All Saints Day and All Souls Day that follows. In the 9th century Pope Gregory IV moved the feast of All Saints Day to November 1 so The Holy Eve vigil was held on October 31.

Souls are all the departed and Saints are the ones that have made it to heaven. There was an original sense that the living were sort of helping the "in betweenners" to make it to heaven. Some of us remember praying for the poor souls in purgatory and we honored the Saints that had made it.

But as with most holidays secular influences have taken over original meanings. Easter Recess has become Spring Break. However much fun it is for kids, and for adults for that matter, Halloween has transitioned from a time of reaching out to the departed to wearing Mermaid and Frankenstein costumes.

Which is why a recent visit to Disneyland became for me an eye opener. In Frontierland there is a Mexican restaurant next to which is a wonderful display of the traditional Hispanic “Dia de los Muertos” or Day of the Dead. If you look for it online you will see that Disney advertises the display as “cheerful skeletons and brightly colored altars with marigolds and sugar skulls.” And the celebration has altars — I like that.

It is, as I might say, well...inviting as the celebration should be. In fact, the real Day of the Dead celebrations go on for three full days. Sometimes relatives will go to graveyards and recall humorous incidents that involved the deceased relative. And they celebrate. The event invites you to communicate with souls and tries to encourage the souls to communicate with you.

Actually, if they did, I have some questions that I am dying to ask my father.

Leave it to Disney to reawaken a spiritual pleasure even in a secular amusement park.

I have been told there are many secrets hidden in Disneyland beckoning you to discover them all. For example, the Purple Tea Cup in the Mad Hatter’s Ride is suppose to spin the fastest. But that sounds a little TOO scary for me to check out. I’ll stick with with hanging out at the Day of the Dead.