

BELIEVING IN THE GREAT PUMPKIN — AND IN WONDER

By **Dr. Peter F. Folan**
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Before streaming, the world paused each October when “It’s the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown” aired. For me, it wasn’t Snoopy or Charlie Brown who stole the show, but Linus — the philosopher with his blanket, sitting faithfully in the pumpkin patch.

Each Halloween, he waits for “the Great Pumpkin” to appear. Year after year, it never comes — and yet, Linus still believes. To some, it’s foolish. To others, it’s beautiful. But the truth is, Linus shows us that the real magic isn’t in what arrives, but in the hope and wonder we keep alive.

Halloween has always been a night of wonder. As children, it was the one night we could run wild after dark — capes flapping, masks slipping, bags filling with candy. It was freedom wrapped in costume: to be a princess, a superhero, a ghoul, or a monster, if only for a few hours. The night air was crisp, the leaves crunched underfoot, and the streetlights cast just enough glow to make the shadows feel mysterious. We cut through yards, leapt over bushes, and heard parents’ voices trailing behind: “Say thank you!”

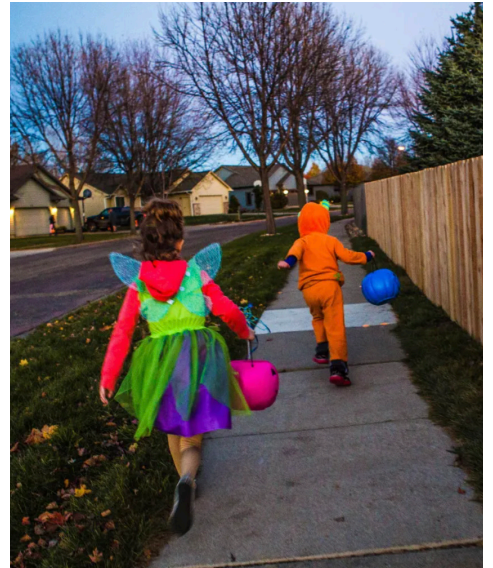
And here’s the thing: kids don’t outgrow that sense of wonder as

quickly as we think. They crave it. Middle schoolers, even high schoolers, still show up at our doors in costumes — sometimes half-hearted, sometimes ironic, sometimes inspired. It’s tempting to sigh or roll our eyes. Aren’t they too old for this? Not a chance.

Isn’t it better that they’re out running through the night, howling at the moon, breathing in the autumn air than sitting behind screens? Didn’t we once feel the call of the pack, too? They may not say it out loud, but they still crave fun, mischief, and permission to be silly.

That’s where we, as parents, come in. Like Linus, we can choose to believe — not in the Great Pumpkin itself, but in the value of keeping traditions. This is why we carve pumpkins, tell scary stories, and dress up alongside our kids — not because we expect something magical to arrive, but because the act of believing makes the magic real.

Our kids may laugh at our enthusiasm, but years from now they’ll remember. They’ll remember scooping out pumpkin guts, the glow of jack-o’-lanterns, and the excitement of Halloween night. In those memories, they’ll discover that wonder doesn’t disappear with age — it only changes form.



Like the vines in Linus’s pumpkin patch, seeds of wonder grow best when tended with sincerity. Just as Linus insists the Great Pumpkin only rises in the most “sincere pumpkin patch,” kids know how to be sincere — when they roar like a monster, believe they’re a princess, or proudly carry Captain America’s shield. They do it all with genuine joy.

This Halloween, let’s join Linus in the pumpkin patch. Let’s wait, let’s laugh, let’s hope. Let’s make room for play, for silliness, for mystery. Try howling at the moon, throw on a cape, eat a cider donut with your kids — just because.

Because we need that wonder, and our children need it, too.