



A Pastoral Word on Halloween

by Archbishop Kyrill



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The Joyous Feast of Pumpkin

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It is that time of the year when the secular society in which we live is preparing for the festival of Halloween. Many do not know its spiritual roots and history, and why it contradicts the teachings of the Church. The feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times among the Celtic peoples of Great Britain, Ireland and northern France. These pagan peoples believed that life was born from death. Therefore they celebrated the beginning of the "new year" in the fall (on the eve of October 31 and into the day of November 1) when, as they believed, the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began. A certain deity whom they called Samhain was believed by the Celts to be the Prince of Death and it was he whom they honored at their New Year's festival*.

From an Orthodox Christian point of view, we can see many diabolical beliefs and practices associated with this feast which have endured to this time. On the eve of the New Year's festival, the Druids, who were the priests of the Celtic cult, instructed their people to extinguish all hearth fires and lights. On the evening of the festival, a huge bonfire built from oak branches (oak was regarded by the Celts as sacred) was ignited. Upon this fire sacrifices were burned as an offering in order to appease and cajole Samhain, the Prince of Death. It was also believed that Samhain, being pleased by the offerings, allowed the souls of the dead to return to their homes for a festal visit on this day. It is from this belief that the practice of wandering about in the dark dressed up in costumes imitating ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, fairies, etc. grew up. For the living entered into fellowship and communion with the dead by what was, and still is, a ritual act of imitation, through costume and the activity of wandering around in the dark of night, even as the souls of the dead were believed to wander.

The dialogue of trick or treat is also an integral part of this system of beliefs and practices. It was believed that the souls of the dead who had entered into the world of darkness, decay and death, and therefore into total communion with and submission

to Samhain, bore the affliction of great hunger on their festal visit. Out of this grew the practice of begging, which was a further ritual enactment and imitation of what the Celts believed to be the activities of the souls of the dead on their festal visit. Associated with this is the still further implication that if the souls of the dead and their imitators were not appeased with "treats", i.e., *offerings*, then the wrath and anger of Samhain would be unleashed through a system of "tricks", i.e. curses. Such is the true meaning of this pagan feast. It is then evident that for an Orthodox Christian participation at any level is impossible and idolatrous, resulting in a genuine betrayal of God and Church. If we participate in the ritual activity of imitating the dead and wandering in the dark *asking* for treats or *offering* them to children, we then have willfully sought fellowship with the dead, whose Lord is not Samhain, but rather Satan. It is to Satan then that these treats are offered, not to children.

There are other practices associated with Halloween from which we must stay away, such as sorcery, fortune telling, divination, games of chance, witchcraft and the carving of an ugly face upon a pumpkin and then placing a lit candle within the infamous Jack O' Lantern. The pumpkin (in older days other vegetables were used) was carved by the Celts in imitation of the dead and used to convey the new light (from the sacred oak fire) to the home where the lantern was left burning through the night. This "holy lantern" is no other than an imitation of the truly holy votive light (lampada) offered before an icon of Christ and the saints. Even the use and display of the Jack O'Lantern involves participation in this "death" festival honoring Satan.

The Holy Fathers of the first millennium (a time when the Church was one and strictly Orthodox) counteracted this Celtic pagan feast by introducing the Feast of All Saints. It is from this that the term Halloween developed. The word Halloween has its roots in the Old English of All Hallow E'en, i.e., the Eve commemorating all those who were hallowed (sanctified), i.e. Halloween Unfortunately, either due to lack of knowledge or understanding, the Celtic pagan feast being celebrated on the same day as the Christian feast of All Saints (in western Christendom) came to be known as Halloween.

The people who remained pagan and therefore anti-Christian reacted to the Church's attempt to supplant their festival by celebrating this evening with increased fervor. Many of these practices involved desecration and mockery of the Church's reverence for Holy Relics. Holy things, such as crosses and the Reserved Sacrament, were stolen and used in perverse and sacrilegious ways. The practice of begging became a system of persecution designed to harass Christians who were, by their beliefs, unable to participate by making offerings to those who served the Lord of Death.

One can see in contemporary Western society that the Western Church's attempt to supplant this pagan festival with a Christian feast failed. How then did something that is so obviously contradictory to the Holy Orthodox faith gain such acceptance among Christian people?

The answer is spiritual apathy and listlessness which are the spiritual roots of atheism and turning away from God. Today's society urges one that Halloween and other such festivities, notwithstanding their apparent pagan and idolatrous origin, are nonetheless harmless and of no consequence. Upon closer consideration these pagan festivals are the source for destroying any kind of spiritual foundation and lead to

disbelief and outright atheism.

Halloween undermines the very basis of the Church which was founded on the blood of martyrs who had refused, by giving up their lives, to partake in any form of idolatry

Holy Mother Church must take a firm stand in counteracting any such (pagan) events. Christ taught us that God is the judge in all our actions and beliefs and that we are either FOR GOD or AGAINST GOD. There is no neutral or middle of the road approach.

Today we witness a revival of satanist cults; we hear of satanic services conducted on Halloween night. Children are kidnapped by satanists for their ritualistic sacrifices. Orthodox clergy are ritualistically killed as has happened more than once in California. Everywhere Satan reaches out to ensnare as many innocent people as possible. The newsstands are filled with material on spiritualism, supernatural phenomena, seances, prophecies and all sorts of demonically inspired works. These works all serve Satan, for they are not the fruit of the Holy Spirit, but the fruit of the spirit of this world.

Source: <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/halloween.aspx>

Apostle Paul:

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: **for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.**

Acts 26: 14-18

Halloween is devilish!

For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. *Leviticus 3: 44*

I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 26: 18



Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath

righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (Satan)? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2nd Cor 6: 14-18



And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet **repented not** of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Rev 9: 20-21



And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev 12: 9



And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. **And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.**

Rev 20: 7-10

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2nd Cor 11: 3



When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations**. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. **For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD:** and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath **not** suffered thee so to do. *Deuteronomy 18: 9-14*

