

Halloween: Hallowed or Harmful?

In book called "Halloween and Satanism" it states, "Did you know that Halloween is a day witches celebrate above all other days? Even the Internal Revenue Services has given tax-exempt status to the church of Wicca (the official church of witchcraft), which means your gift to witchcraft is a tax-deductible, charitable donation of a religious nature, the same as if you were tithing to the (Christian) Church".

So how did Halloween begin? Many centuries before the birth of Christ, the Celts and priests, inhabitants of Britain and Ireland, observed the festival of Samhain on October 31 (Samhain is their god, lord of the dead). This marked the eve of the Celtic New Year, which began on November 1. It was at this time that the full harvest was complete and winter was creeping in. The Celts believed that the power of the Sun was fading and for the next few months, darkness would prevail. They also believed that during the Samhain, the evil separating the living and the dead was at its thinnest. They believed that on the evening of October 31, evil spirits and souls of the dead passed through the barrier and entered the world of the living. Departed family members would revisit their earthly homes. The thought was frightening and exciting! In the book of Micah the prophet also, God speaks out strongly against those who practice witchcraft and the like by saying, "I will cut off sorcerers from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard" (Micah 5:12-15).

I hope that it is clear to the beloved readers, the background behind Halloween and that it is not something which is "fun" and nice. It does have evil connotations to it that we must be aware of. What does it mean as a Christian to dress your child as a witch or devil? Is this what our Lord has asked us to teach our children? Some might say that, "This helps us to teach our children not to be afraid of anything." Is this the way to teach our children not to fear, or is it through the words of Christ that fear is cast out and peace and comfort prevail? I am sure the answer is clear!

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St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Trusting the Church

In learning and professing the faith, embrace and guard that only which is now delivered to you by the church and confirmed by all the Scriptures. For since not everyone has the education and the leisure required to read and know the Scriptures, to prevent the soul perishing from ignorance, we sum up the whole doctrine of the faith in a few lines....For the present, just listen and memorize the creed as I recite it, and you will receive in due course the testimony from Scripture of each of its propositions. For the articles of faith have not been composed to please human desire,

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but the most important points collected from the Scriptures make up one complete teaching of the faith. And just as the mustard seed in a small grain contains in embryo many future branches, so also the creed embraces in a few words all the religious knowledge in both the Old and New Testament. Pay Attention, therefore, brothers, and cling to the teachings which are now delivered to you, and "write them on the tablet of your heart."



Contemplation Verse

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

--Acts 20:28



Book Review

Father Arseny

Trans: Vera Bouteneff

ISBN: 0-88141-180-9

Father Arseny, translated by Vera Bouteneff, is a book of hope and undying faith. Set during the time of Stalin's dictatorship in Soviet Russia, it is made up of a compilation of writings and stories told by Father Arseny's spiritual children and countless others whose lives he had changed. Fr. Arseny, previously Piotr Andreyevich Streltsov, was a Russian Orthodox monk who was arrested for his faith and forced to spend twenty years of his life in a "special" camp where prisoners were sent to die. His story unearths the cruelty that humanity had to endure during this evil time, all for having their own religious beliefs or political views.

Fr. Arseny spent all his days in camp in constant, heart-felt prayer to the Lord. He was beaten, cursed, and mocked for his faith, and yet he never returned any of the offenses that were dealt to him, but instead carried a radiant grace and peace inside of him that made everybody wonder. Through his love and caring nature, Father Arseny brought even the most ruthless criminals and stubborn atheists to God. He used every opportunity that was given to him to care for those who fell ill or became injured, often without a thank-you, and even more often while being mocked by the very person he was caring for. What is even more profound is the way he uplifted the many prisoners whose spirits were broken because of the degrading lives they were forced to live while in the camp.

Father Arseny is the ideal example of what it means to carry Christ in oneself for all to see. Even amidst all the torture he experienced every minute while in the camp, he never once gave up on God, as so many others did who were thrown into similar conditions. *Father Arseny* gives the reader a new sense of hope to live for God in every way possible. This powerful book also reminds the Christian how much of a sinner he is, especially when compared to this great man who himself was very humble in spirit and always considered himself to be a sinner.

