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**MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER**



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“12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

. ” (Luk 21: 12-19)

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The committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news or comments. Please mail your articles, comments...etc. to the church or e-mail them to newsletter@archangelmichaelchurch.net

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HALLOWEEN: HALLOWED OR HARMFUL ???

By His Grace Bishop Suriel

The subject of Halloween is something that has caught my attention over the last few weeks. Some might ask why?

As this is a natural part of life in America, they may add that: "this is the second important occasion on

our yearly calendar after Christmas. It's a fun time for us and our children, who dress up in a scary clothes and go around trick or treating and having lots of fun" Fun? I am not so sure about that? Can we call dressing up our children as vampires, ghosts, devils and witches as fun? As I passed through some stores, I was some-what surprised by how much impact Halloween played in people's lives. It was everywhere, in shopping centers, banks, hospitals, households, everywhere you could see signs of people preparing for this "fun" celebration. I was even asked by one person in a retail store where I had obtained my black gown, because this was exactly what she was looking for, for a Halloween party! When I replied "from Egypt", she became so sad, perhaps because she expected me to tell her which costume shop I had bought it from!

We also need to realize that Halloween is a big business in America. The Christian Broadcasting Network states that, "Merchants also look forward to October 31. The sale of candy, costumes, decorations, and party goods make Halloween one of the major retail seasons of the year." In a 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 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!

The Celts believed that these spirits and dead souls could torment the living. Crops might be destroyed, babies stolen, farm animals killed. But this was also

an opportunity to commune with the spirits and divine the future. The Devil, the lord of darkness, was ordinarily feared, but during Samhain his power would be called on to foretell the future.

Trick or Treat

The Druids were responsible for appeasing the goblins and preventing harm to the people. Huge Samhain bonfires were lit to guide the way of the spirits. Various sacrifices, including human, were performed to assure a good year. Like many pagan cultures around the world, the Celts left out food for the spirits, hoping that a "treat" would prevent an evil "trick".

Centuries later, descendants of the Celts continued to observe the Samhain festival by dressing as evil spirits. They roamed from house to house demanding food in exchange for the "spirits" leaving the home unharmed. They craved demon faces in hollowed-out turnips and lighted them with candles. This is what is called "Jack-O-Lantern". The story says that an Irish drunkard named Jack made a deal with the devil and devil agreed to spare his soul for ten years. But a year later, Jack died and was turned back from the gates of heaven. So he went to the gates of hell and was rejected by the devil also. So as Jack was walking to find a place, he was eating a turnip so the devil threw him a live coal out of the fires of the hell. So Jack put the coal in the turnip to help him see. It is believed that since that time Jack is roaming the face of the earth with the Jack-O-Lantern seeking a place of rest. I hope such a story that is rooted in devil worship will make people think carefully before they put a Jack-O-Lantern in their house! Just as people once offered gifts of food to the spirits, people today offer treats to the children who represent them. In reality, the lighted Jack-O-Lanterns, the children carry, are really a symbol of the fires and torches of former Halloweens and of the ancient Samhain. This was the beginning of the trick or treat!

All Hallows' Eve

In the seventh century the Roman Catholic Church set aside a day in May in memory of the early Christians who died for their faith. It was called All Saints' Day. By the year 900 the date was changed to November 1st. Another name for All Saints' Day was All Hallows. October 31st. was known as All Hallows' Eve, which was later shortened to Halloween. The reason for the change of the date was an attempt to encourage people to replace this evil celebration with a holy feast.

Halloween in America

Halloween with all its customs arrived in America in the mid-1800's with the Irish immigrants. The costumes of the children going "trick or treating" has become an established American tradition. Only in recent years have parents hesitated to send their children into streets because of the increased danger of accidents, poisoned food and menacing strangers.

People today might be innocently imitating the ancient Celtic customs, but in an indirect way they are participating and celebrating something sinister and evil. The Christian Broadcasting Network states that, "Witches and Satanists still

consider Halloween to be one of the strongest times during the year to cast a spell. On Halloween most witchcraft practitioners participate in ritual called "drawing down the moon". In this, the chief witch of the coven (group of witches) becomes, they believe, a channel for the moon goddess. During this ritual, the participants both male and female, are 'sky-clad' that is, naked ... Evidence persists that some Satanist and voodoo groups offer sacrifices - usually animals but possibly human babies".

The Biblical Response to Halloween

People celebrating Halloween today are naturally not thinking about the darkness and evil that underlies most Halloween practices. They are just thinking of it as a fun time. Some might say, "surely, you can not deny children or adults the fun of the Halloween just because of its past hideous history. Can there be anything wrong with lighthearted raging?"

Let us see what the Bible says.

In the book of Deuteronomy God gives clear instructions to His people concerning associating with such practices. "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. These shall not be found among you anymore who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead". (Deuteronomy 18:9 - 11)

In the second book of Kings it says, "And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger." (2kings 17:17) So, all of these practices God saw as evil, and angered Him.

Saint Paul mentioned witchcraft amongst the works of the flesh which are the manifest in Galatians 5:19-21. Also Saint John in his Revelation mentions that sorcerers "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

In the book of Micah the prophet God also 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!

Let us rethink how we spend this day. Let us educate our young people about the facts of Halloween and perhaps arrange for a spiritual meeting to replace the Halloween parties that young people attend. During this time perhaps a lecture or discussion can be organized around this topic. It should be also a time of fervent prayer, so that our Lord Jesus Christ will protect us from all the powers of the Enemy. As we say in the Prayers of Thanksgiving. "All envy, all temptation, all works of Satan, all intrigues of the wicked, rising up of enemies, visible and invisible do cast away from us and all your people."



THE LORD CHRIST AND THE CROSS

Excerpts FROM: The Feast of the Cross;

by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Selected by: Joseph Michael

The Cross is every difficulty which we suffer in view of our love for God, or for our love for people, for the Kingdom of God in general.

The Lord invited us to bear the Cross and said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24) (Mark 8:34). And He said to the rich young man: "Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21). ***He made the bearing of the Cross a condition for the discipleship to Him.*** He said: "*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple*" (Luke 14:27). ***He Himself, during all the period of His Incarnation on earth, lived bearing the Cross.***

Since His Nativity, Herod wanted to kill Him, and He ran away with His mother to Egypt. When He began his mission, he suffered the fatigue of the service, and had "nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9: 58). He lived a life of pain, so that Isaiah said about Him that He is: "A man of sorrow and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He was bitterly persecuted by the Jews. Once they "took up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:31). Another time they wanted to "throw Him down over the cliff" (Luke 4:29). As for their insults and their accusation of Him, they are very numerous. All these are crosses which are other than the Cross on which He was crucified.

THE JUST QUEEN SAINT HELEN

We remember her on the occasion of the Feast of the Cross.17

The Orthodox Coptic Church celebrates her feast on the 9th of Bashans, (the 17th of May), the day of her death in the year 327 AD, and we also remember her on the 17th of Tot, (the 27th or the 28th of September), the day of the feast of the Cross. The Church also remembers her in the assembly of saints in the prayers of the "Psalmody", asking for her prayers and the prayers of her son the Emperor Constantin. Our brothers the Orthodox Greeks built churches in her name, and they celebrate her feast and the feast of her son on the 21st of Ayar. The Latin Church celebrates her feast on the 18th of Aab (August). Her son Emperor Constantin honored her. He gave her the surname "Augusta", meaning queen. He gave her the power over the Imperial treasures. She spent generously and liberally on the construction of churches. She gave to the poor and the needy persons and cities. The historian Eusebius of Cesarea said about her, that during her wandering in the Eastern States she presented numerous proofs of her

magnanimity as an Empress with her imperial generosity that she heaped upon the inhabitants of the various cities as communities and upon the individuals, as well as she offered many aids with the utmost lavishness. She gave money to some, and big quantities of clothes to others. She liberated some from prisons or from the slavery of service in the mines. She delivered others from the violence of persecution, and brought back some others from exile (K3 F44).

She was very religious. She went to church, with simple modest clothes, although she was an empress, and she stood with all veneration among the masses. She was constant in her prayers, and she attended the religious celebrations, and lived as a worshipper more than she lived as a queen. She visited the holy places, bearing the fatigues of travel in her old age.

The Lord suggested to her in a vision, to go to Jerusalem, and to search exactly for the place of the glorious Cross. She went there, and inquired, and discovered three crosses. Saint Macarius, the Bishop of Jerusalem, accompanied her. God manifested the holy cross with a miracle, as it appears in the synaxaire of the 17th of Tot. She placed the cross in a golden box, and gave it to the bishop, and she kept a part of it for her son Constantin who placed some of the holy nails in his protective covering..¹⁸ Saint Helen constructed a church in Behlehem, at the cave where our Lord was born, and she built another one on the Mount of Olives, at the place of the Ascension of the Saviour. She began the construction of the church of the Resurrection..... Her son the emperor Constantin presented to her all that was necessary for her holy work. He sent letters in relation to that, to the governors and to the bishops. This saint specified numerous unalienable properties for the churches and the monasteries, and for spending on the poor. She celebrated a feast in Jerusalem for the sacred virgins and she herself served them.

She built a church in the name of the martyred Saint Lucianos in the town where she was born, which her son called Helenopolis, in her honor. This saint died in 327 AD at the age of 84 years. She wrote her testament to her son the Emperor and to her grandsons the ceasars inciting them to be firm in the life of faith and justice.

Annunciation of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist

By: Mark Michael



On the 26th of the blessed month of Thout of the year of the martyrs, the Church commemorates the annunciation of the birth of Saint John the Baptist to Zacharias the priest. Zacharias was an old man and his wife Elizabeth was barren and her years of having children have long passed. Zacharias continually prayed to the Lord asking God to bless him so that he may follow God's command to Adam to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). The Lord had compassion upon Zacharias and sent the Archangel Gabriel to announce to him the birth of his son Saint John the Baptist. Gabriel appeared to Zacharias while he was in the sanctuary as is described in the Holy Gospel (Luke 1:11) and announced to him the birth of the Prophet John, and that John should precede Christ as it was said in the Prophets, "He shall go before Him." Zacharias questioned the angel asking, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years" (Luke 1:18). Immediately Zacharias was made dumb and could not speak. On the day of Saint John the Baptist's circumcision, they asked about the child's name and Zacharias wrote on a tablet "His name is John" and immediately his mouth opened and he began to praise God.

May the prayers of Zacharias the Priest and Saint John the Baptist be with all. Amen.



BIBLE STUDY

The Third Epistle of Saint John

By: Christine Michael

As with the first and second letters of Saint John, this letter is said to be written by the apostle Saint John. However, unlike his first two letters, John the Elder does not clearly indicate the date or time it was written. The early church tradition approximate the letter being written somewhere around 70 AD from Ephesus, where the ministry of Saint John was located.

This epistle was sent to a Christian man named Gaius, a member of one of the early churches of Asia Minor who had been influenced during St. John's ministry at Ephesus. He was a very trustworthy man whom John could give the task of standing against Diotrefes until Saint John himself could.

At that time, there had been struggles within the early church. This letter is Saint John's response to a struggle in one of the local churches. A church leader, Diotrefes, had taken control over the congregation to such a point where he would not allow leaders from other churches to minister to his congregation. Through this, he had been driving others out of the church, which went against Christ's command to love one another. This type of problem within the church was a morality problem, not a case of doctrine, therefore Saint John planned to correct this problem by a personal visit. In the meantime, he gave Gaius encouragement in this letter.

The early church had itinerant ministers who were messengers of the apostles of churches. The itinerant ministers would minister to a local church of a period of time giving spiritual encouragement and doctrinal instruction; they were equivalent to modern day evangelists and missionaries who travel to encourage other believers. These people were expected to know and teach the doctrines of the apostles while supporting the congregations of the churches. For instance, Titus was Saint Paul's representative in the church of Corinth. In this case, Diotrefes was trying to assert his leadership even against the chosen leaders of the church, the apostles. He even went to the point of driving away representatives of the apostles in order to maintain his personal control.

"From The Nelson study Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville"

**For I will give you a mouth and wisdom,
which all your adversaries shall
not be able to gainsay nor resist,**

(Luk 21:15)

COPTIC FEASTS

October 6 The Angel's
good news to Zacharia for
the birth of St. John the
Baptist

October 11 Martyrdom of
St. Anastasia

October 17 Departure of
St. Paul of Tammuh

CHURCH SERVICES

Fridays

-7:30 PM-8:30 PM

Hymms Lesson

-8:30PM-10:00PM

Arabic Bible Study

Arabic Prayer Meeting

-8:30PM-11:00PM

Midnight Praises

Midnight Prayers

SATURDAYS

-8:00AM-11:30AM:

Divine Liturgy

-12:00AM-1:00PM:

Sunday School &

Youth group meeting



*Please do not forget to pray to the Lord
that He may heal the sick
and
repose the souls of those who have passed away in the
paradise of joy.*