

Saint Mina Retreat Center



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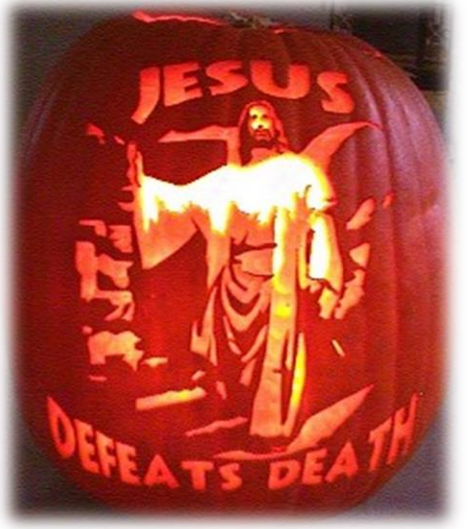
HALLOWEEN

BY: HIS GRACE BISHOP YOUSSEF

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." Ephesians 5:6-12

The "Halloween" celebration pays tribute to Satan. Every act revolving around Halloween is in honor of false gods. False gods are spirits in the Satanic realm.

"We only do this for fun", some say. "We do not actually practice witchcraft", others repeat. I often wonder how one justifies the celebration of Halloween, the day Satanists have set aside as their "holy day". I am told that children "dress up" as witches, goblins, ghosts and little devils. Let me think about this for a moment, a small child dressed to resemble Satan's darkness. Also, I am told of games played at Halloween festivals that promote fear in children as they are ushered through horror houses and rooms decorated with skeletons, black cats, and bats. Does this representation of death and darkness seem like fun? Certainly not to me, I am told that pumpkins designed with faces are "cute ways" to denote the present day meaning of Halloween. The literature purports that pumpkin faces are symbolic of skulls. Also around Halloween I am told of theatre movies which celebrate the cult of death...Somehow I still have not found fun within all of this...Have you? Have your children? To me, this sounds more like fixation with death and mental illness to me...



Many attempt to compromise on the celebrating of Halloween. Many think the meaning behind Halloween has become obscure today. The fact of the matter is, the actual methodology of witchcraft survives until today. When our children are taught it is "alright" to celebrate heathen practices such as "Halloween" it does not give them the repulsion and resistance they need to stand against greater Satanic involvement. When celebrations such as these are taken lightly, it sets a precedence for our children to accept evil rather than resist it.

Many have asked me, "What is the harm?" My answer to this question is that occultism can be seen as a threatening storm brewing on the religious horizon gradually becoming very strong. More specifically, let's contemplate a moment on the origin of "Halloween," begun as a day to give tribute and praise to the dark forces of Satan. "Halloween" is derived from the word "Samhain (Sa-ween)." Samhain, the lord of the dead, called together all the wicked souls who had died within the past year and were destined to inhabit animals. The celebration of the dead honored the god of the dead on this particular night, October 31st. Bonfires were lit high on mountaintops so the spirits of the dead could find their way.

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Suitable food and shelter were provided for these evil spirits or they would inflict havoc, cast spells, steal infants, destroy crops, kill farm animals, and instill terror as they haunted the living. This is where “trick or treat” is derived. To worship evil spirits and false gods is against scripture.

If one knows the Lord Jesus Christ before death, their spirit will be with the Lord. St Paul tells us that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord Christ. If one is an unbeliever at death, the scripture says there is no second chance as “it is appointed unto man once to die and after that judgment”. Therefore, prayer for the satanic is in opposition to God’s Word and a pagan practice cannot become “Christianized.” We must make a decision to be for or against Christ. Our Christian practices must display our beliefs and be an example to the others.

It is at this point I want the reader to stop and think about October 31st. Do we find “All Saints Day” in the Coptic Synaxarium? My Synaxarium does not contain this celebration. Please let me know if yours does. I would certainly like to read this. I was under the impression we celebrated Coptic Saints throughout the ENTIRE year, not on one particular day. While you were searching in your Coptic Synaxarium did you happen to notice two very important feasts, which occur on October 31st, and another the following day? Did you know that the Commemoration of St Mary and the Feast of Anba Roewis occur on October 31st? I am quite sure these feasts were more familiar to you as Copts than the pagan celebration of “Halloween”. Am I correct? The following day is the Feast Day of the Great Evangelist St Luke. I am quite sure you also knew this. Am I again correct?

I do not believe it is in Christian fellowship to celebrate Halloween. I do NOT encourage our children to dress in costumes. Costumes on this night are symbolic of celebrating Halloween. The same holds true for the acceptance of candy. Please think about the following points: Why do we not greet one another during the Holy Passion Week from Wednesday until Saturday morning? It is because we do not want to do anything symbolic of Judas kiss. Another thought to coincide with this thought is, on Holy Thursday we must complete the Divine Liturgy, according to Church Canons, before sunset. There is a reason for this. The Coptic Church does not want to have fellowship with the Jews eating during the Passover. Therefore, any day not set aside for Halloween; any day in which these practices are not symbolic of Satanic practices is alright for eating candy and wearing appropriate costumes. There exists 364 days in which one can eat candy and wear costumes. Only one day in which one cannot.

Attend Church, the Vespers, and the Exaltation of the Saints on October 31st. Create plays and skits for the great saints St. Mary, St. Roewis, and St. Luke. The Mother of God, the poor layman who sold salt, and the Gospel writer’s life can teach us so much! Reflect upon their lives. Spiritually meet together, and then enjoy the social atmosphere of Christian fellowship, Saints’ plays and Agape meal. Let’s all give thanks to God for a true Christian reason to celebrate this day!

I want to close with one final thought. Using witchcraft to foretell the future was against God’s Law and caused King Saul of Israel to lose his life. The Lord Pronounced His sever punishment upon Saul that very night; “And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day” (I Samuel 28:17-18).

The Bible clearly warns us to flee from the occult practices. It delineates the consequences making it forbidden to mankind. I did not find one reference to “only doing this for fun.” How can one derive “fun” from celebrating darkness and honoring the “lord of the dead”?

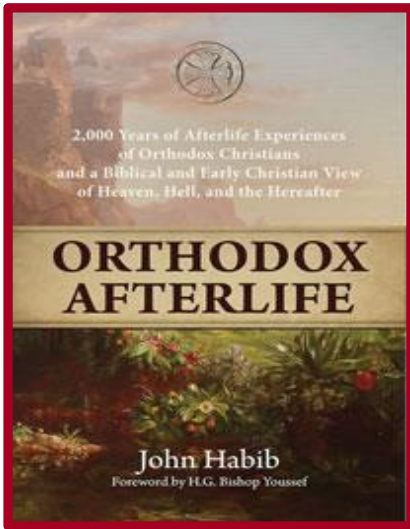
Satan worship is prevalent today in middle schools and high schools. We address this issue frequently in our youth meetings. Literature searches have revealed that at least 100 million Americans practice some form of the occult. We know that using witchcraft to foretell the future was a crime that cost King Saul his life. What will the price we will have to pay “for just having fun” be?

Let us pray that God will grant us wisdom to abstain from this dark celebration, and in all things bring honor to His Holy Name.

RECOMMENDED READING

ORTHODOX AFTERLIFE

BY: JOHN HABIB



The entire endeavor began when John Habib was in college and living a very worldly life. After being confronted with an Egyptian monk's afterlife story, his life was turned around and he then returned to the faith of his youth. From there, John continued to seek out what Orthodox Christianity really has to say about what happens after we die.

Fifteen years in the making, and after incorporating the guidance of several Orthodox scholars and theologians, this book gathers together a plethora of afterlife experiences of Orthodox Christians from all over the world, spanning 2,000 years of Christian history. The reader is taken on a journey from the moment of death to crossing over into the next existence, witnessing the afterlife through the eyes of others who beheld it and were able to tell us their stories. Each aspect of the afterlife presented in the book is grounded first on the Holy Bible, and then an array of early Christian writings is presented to provide a foundation upon which the reader may understand the experiences presented.

The remarkable feature of this book, as one endorser put it, is that all the experiences "are remarkably consistent.... Far from speculative—they suggest an underlying and almost overwhelming unity with both Scripture and the Church Fathers."

SOME EVENTS AT THE RETREAT CENTER...

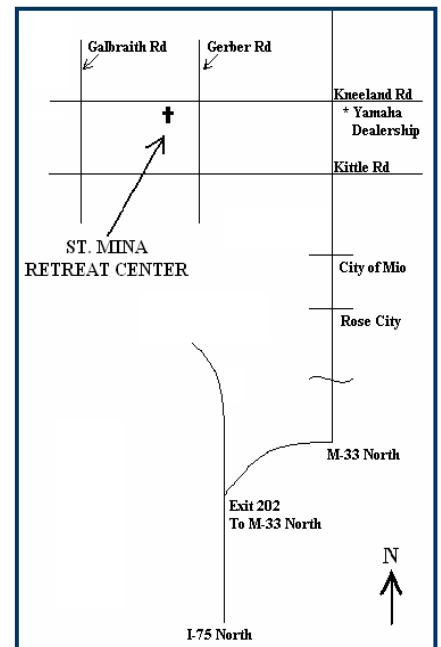


UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2016

- **October 24-26** Monthly Retreat
- **November 3-5** Monthly Retreat
- **November 23-24** Feast of Saint Mina
- **December 16-17** Monthly Retreat

WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER...

Every year the high school youth end their long summer in St. Mina Retreat Center in Mio, Michigan. The retreat center brings all the young youth together in worship and bonding! This past August St. Mark youth gathered together and took a trip up north before going back to school. This trip mainly focused on prayer and bonding as well as getting to know each other on another level. This was such a great time to “retreat” from reality for a little bit and for the youth to focus on important things with guidance of the Fr. Mina Essak and the amazing group of servants who served on this trip!



If you know anyone who is not currently receiving this newsletter and would like to receive it, please send their information to info@stminaretreatcenter.org