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The Hijacking of Halloween

Ξένες γλώσσες / In English



by Fr. Milovan Katanic

While September is the beginning of the ecclesiastical year which is marked by our commemoration of the great devotion to God and extreme ascetism of St.Simeon the Stylite, the old custom of the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland and northern France was to bring in the new year at the end of October, but in a much darker fashion.

According to an article by the Russian Archpriest Victor Potapov, these people believe that physical life was born from death so it was logical for them to welcome the “new year” in the fall when, as they believed, the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began. The Celts believed that a certain deity, whom they called Samhain, was the lord of death. To him they gave honor at their New Year’s festival. On the eve of the festival the priests of the Celtic cult, the Druids, instructed their people to extinguish all hearth fires and lights and they ignited one large bonfire which was believed to be sacred. It was at that bonfire that sacrifices were made to the lord of death, Samhain. They believed that their lord, pleased with the offerings, would allow the dead to return to their homes. It was this belief that brought the tradition of wondering about in the dark dressed in costumes indicating ghosts, witches and demons.

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