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Seasoning the Seasons™

The Institute for Christian Formation, Inc.

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All Saints/All Souls

All Saints and All Souls

Love never dies. We have experienced, and we will experience, the death of those we love. But love itself never dies. Perhaps this is the basis for honoring our dead - for keeping alive their memory. Look around your home. Chances are you have at least one photo of a deceased loved one. You most likely have mementos of those who have gone before you - perhaps a piece of jewelry that belonged to your grandmother.

Every culture throughout the ages has in some way, shape or form honored their dead. And as Christians, we know that death is not the final word. By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ trampled death itself. And we share in Jesus' victory.



We have evidence that from as early as the second century, Christians were praying for their dead and celebrating Mass for the dead. This often happened on the third day after death (note that Christ rose on the third day!), and on the anniversary of the death. Soon there were remembrances associated with the thirtieth, and then the fortieth day after death, as well. By the fourth century in the East there was a celebration in honor of the martyrs - those who had died for their faith. Eventually this included all the saints, not just the martyrs. In 844, Pope Gregory IV celebrated a feast of all the saints on November 1st. Martyrs who had shed their blood for the faith, and all saints were included, and this was 150 years before we had our first "canonized" saint! In the seventh century, Bishop Isidore of Seville ordered his monks to celebrate Mass for the souls of the faithful departed on the day after Pentecost. In 998 Abbot Odilo of Cluny ordered all monasteries he governed to celebrate a memorial of the faithful departed. This was accepted in Rome by the fourteenth century. And, as you will note below, we continue this custom to this day.

All Saints/ All Souls

- * All Hallows' Eve, or Halloween, is the eve of All Saints Day. It is therefore much more about the month of November than October!
- * November 1st is the Solemnity of All Saints, a holy day of obligation.
- * On November 2nd we celebrate the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed.
- * The Communion of Saints is made up of the living and the dead.



All Saints and All Souls on Today's Calendar

In our Church Year, November is a month in which we especially remember those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith - the faithful departed. November 1st is the Solemnity of All Saints, a Holy Day of Obligation in the United States. November 2nd is the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, or All Souls Day.

The word "saint" comes from the Latin word "sanctus" which means "holy." The word "hallow" means to "consecrate" or to "make holy." (In the Lord's Prayer we pray "hallowed be thy name.") An old name for All Saints Day was Halloween. The evening before Halloween was called All Hallows' Eve. Hence the name "Halloween" for October 31st.

It is good to note that Halloween isn't about the month of October. Rather, it is ushering in the month of November - the month we remember our dead, the faithful departed. Keep that in mind as you keep these days: All Hallows' Eve, All Saints Day, and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed.

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We Are Family!

Genealogy is a popular hobby these days. Some people spend hours, weeks, months, even years researching their family tree. Sometimes this may take them on long journeys to far away countries. And sometimes their investigations lead to some surprising results!

But do you realize that we also have a “faith family tree”? Just as we trace our blood ancestors, so too can we

trace our ancestors in faith. We are sons and daughters of the living God. Jesus is our brother. Would you like to find out more about your faith family tree? A good place to begin might be with Jesus’ human family tree. We can find this in the Bible.

Open your Bible to chapter one in Matthew’s Gospel. Here you will find the genealogy of Jesus! And it is pretty interesting. You might take note that

very few women are included, and you might be surprised at which women are included!

Do we have other ancestors in faith? We most certainly do! Millions of them, as a matter of fact! Who are they? What are their names? Some of the names we know and some we do not. Some of these people are our blood relatives. Some are not. We are part of a very large faith family with a very long history. We are part of the Communion of Saints!



The Tree of Jesse
Iconographer:
Michael Damaskinos
Early 17th Century
St. Catherine’s Church
Heraklion, Crete

The Communion of Saints



All Saints
Fra Angelico
15th Century

When we are baptized we become part of the Body of Christ, the Church. We die and rise with Christ in baptism, which you might say is our “first death.” And in faith, we believe that the end of our earthly life is not the final chapter. By Christ’s death and resurrection, the gates of paradise have been opened for us. If we are faithful, we will enjoy life everlasting praising God with all the angels and saints!

Think about the Rite of Baptism. We listen to the Word of God. Then, following the Intercessions and prior to the prayer of exorcism and pre-baptismal anointing, we invoke the Saints. Think about the Word of God and the Litany of the Saints. Why would we hear the Word and invoke the Saints immediately prior to baptism? Because the person to be baptized is joining the

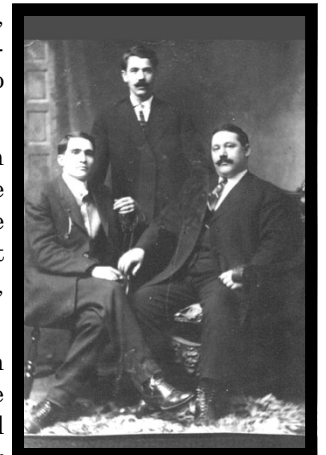
family of faith! Our ancestors in Scripture and the Saints born during and after Jesus’ lifetime are all part of this family, as are all those - living and dead - who have been marked “by the sign of faith.” We share a communion “*in holy things*” and “*among holy persons*” (CCC 948). Think of the wonderful family reunion we will celebrate for all eternity in the new and heavenly city, Jerusalem!

Saints

On certain days in our Church Year we celebrate the Feast Day of a particular saint. For example, on October 18th we celebrate the Feast of Saint Luke, Evangelist. Then on November 1st we celebrate All Saints Day. Why do some saints have a specific feast day on the calendar, as opposed to All Saints Day?

When we talk about the Communion of Saints, we are talking about the entire Church on earth and in heaven. We are among Jesus’ disciples still journeying here on earth. Then there are those very faithful disciples who have died and are now sharing in the glory of heaven. Some of these people were known by many and their good deeds have been recalled down through the ages; Saint Francis of Assisi or Saint Joan of Arc, for example. Dead for centuries, we still know them by name, and their holiness has been officially recognized by the Church.

We may or may not know the names of other faithful disciples who have died and are now in heaven. Perhaps a bystander in a Scripture story whose name was never recorded but was a close follower of Jesus, perhaps someone who died for their faith whose name was never recorded, and perhaps a friend or relative we have loved who faithfully followed Jesus while alive. We remember all of these saints, named and unnamed, on All Saints Day.



Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed

The communion of the Church of heaven and earth consists not only of those of us who are the disciples of Jesus still journeying here on earth and of the saints who are already experiencing the full glory of heaven. There are also those who have died and are in the state of purgatory, being purified. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 954-959.) We remember all of our faithful departed on November 2nd.

From very ancient times, those who are living have remembered and honored their dead. How this has been done has varied somewhat from culture to culture. Many of our modern traditions and customs come from these ancient practices. In Mexico and Central America and other Hispanic cultures, November 2nd is celebrated as *Día de los Muertos*, or the Day of the Dead. In homes, an altar or *ofrenda*, is set up, which might include such items as photos of the deceased, decorated sugar skulls, wildly dressed skeletons, candles, and foods and beverages favored by the deceased. Rather than being a time of mourning, this takes on a much more celebratory nature, much like a family reunion.

Sometimes this celebration is spread out over three days, October 31-November 2nd, the Days of the Dead. Celebrations such as the Day of the Dead help us to remember that we really are all one family. Even death cannot separate us from the love of God and the love of one another!



The Light of Christ



Here in the Northern Hemisphere, our daylight hours are short in November. The dark and the cold begin to take over. Nature is dying. We all have a natural aversion to the darkness. The darkness can be scary, it can seem evil. Imagine how much truer this was before we had electricity or light bulbs! But as Christians we know that Christ conquers the darkness - Christ is our Light.

We first receive the Light of Christ at our baptism. We are called to be the light of Christ to others all throughout our life. And at our death, when our body is brought to the church, the casket is positioned to rest in the light of the Paschal Candle.

Candles and fire are very much associated

with our celebrations of All Saints and All Souls. Candles are placed on our home altars that honor our dead. In some cultures, lighted candles are placed on the graves in the cemetery. We light large bonfires, around which we celebrate. We light candles in our Jack-O-Lanterns. And someday we will live forever in the brilliant glory of heaven - in perpetual light...

Eternal rest grant unto them,

O Lord,

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed,

Through the mercy of God,

rest in peace. Amen.

Trick or Treat

We have already seen how many of our customs and traditions come from very ancient times. In Celtic Britain, *Samhain* was celebrated on October 31st. The people believed that at *Samhain*, the spirits of the dead roamed around creating fear and havoc. So, to chase these spirits away, the people sometimes dressed up like them. And this was an ancient version

of our modern-day Halloween costume. People would mock death by dressing up like skeletons or ghosts or ghouls.

Now, of course, if the spirits roaming around happened to be your deceased relatives and friends, you might invite these spirits into your home to get warm by the fire and share some food. By the Middle Ages, Christians began "souling."

They would go to homes begging for a "soul cake" in exchange for saying a prayer for the dead:

A soul cake, a soul cake,

Pray, good missus, a soul cake...

One for Peter, two for Paul,

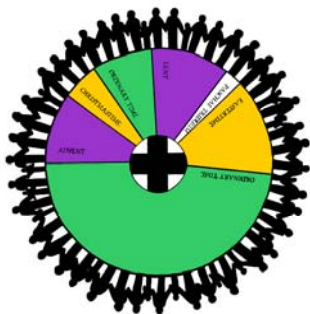
Three for Him who made us all...

So our modern version of Trick or Treat, just like Halloween costumes, themselves, has very ancient roots. Perhaps it is true that there is nothing new under the sun!



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Seasoning the Seasons™ is a mark of the Institute for Christian Formation, Inc. These resources are created to help us more deeply immerse ourselves in the Liturgical Calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. There are resources for the Liturgical Seasons, Feast Days, and other special occasions in our Church Year.

The Institute for Christian Formation, Inc. (ICF) is a non-profit corporation that assists the faithful – families, catechists, parishes, schools, etc. – with holistic faith formation centered on Jesus Christ revealing himself to us in Word (Scripture), Sacrament, and the Liturgical Calendar. Founded in 2004, the ICF strives to assist Catholic Christians in celebrating and handing on faith in a manner authentic to our Roman Catholic tradition.

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Homecoming

Last October I was out of town visiting relatives. Once there, I was informed that this happened to be Homecoming Weekend at my godchildren's school. So Friday evening I did something that is not a usual part of my Friday schedule - I went to halftime during the football game to see my godson perform in the marching band.

Autumn is a time of homecoming. It is a time of harvest. It is no fluke that we celebrate Thanksgiving in November. Things are ending. In our northern hemisphere, much in nature is dying. Winter is on its way.



The Walls of Jerusalem

In autumn, we are also approaching the end of our Church Year. The Solemnity of Christ the King is the last Sunday in the Liturgical Year. The first Sunday of Advent, (either the last Sunday in November or the first in December), begins a new Church Year. In our language of faith, this is all reflected in the Paschal Mystery. Autumn gives way to winter, and then in the spring the earth is "reborn." In faith, we know that resurrection follows death - we must die in order to rise.

It is fitting that we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day) in the autumn of the year, for they are harvest festivals. The Lord is the master of the harvest. Those who lived in the Lord in this life, now live with the Lord in eternal life.

The readings assigned to the Solemnity of All Saints speak volumes. The Gospel (Matthew 5:1-12a) is the Beatitudes. Jesus is telling us how to live in this life, so as to reap the rewards of eternal life. The first reading (Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14) provides us with imagery and a vision of the heavenly city of Jerusalem. It is this heavenly city that is the destination of our journey. This will be our homecoming as we live with God, and praising God, forever. The second reading (1 John 3:1-3) acknowledges our spiritual family ties, as we are called children of God.

There are a number of choices of readings for the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, and they all focus on resurrection faith. As we profess in our creed, *I look forward to the resurrection of the dead. Amen!*