

ALL SAINTS' DAY

While the close of October is typically known for Halloween, its liturgical forerunner is All Hallows' Eve (Oct. 31) followed by All Saints' Day on November 1st. Even though many saints of the church are remembered throughout the calendar year, All Saints' provides a dedicated day to call to memory those saints who have led the way before us. We honour the example of their lives and deaths and rejoice in the continued communion with them through membership and participation in the body of Christ.

When is All Saints' Day?

One of the seven principal feasts, All Saints' traditionally begins at vespers on All Hallows' Eve (Oct. 31, right about the time the neighbourhood kids are showing in costume to ask for candy) and continues through the following day.

Many of the traditions surrounding All Hallows', All Saints', and All Souls' (or the Feast of the Faithful Departed, November 2) have been confusingly condensed into one of those three days.

If a church so desires, it may celebrate All Saints' "on the Sunday following November 1, in addition to its observance on the fixed date" (BCP 2019, p. 688).

Where did All Saints' Day come from?

Despite its association with Halloween, a feast day of remembrance for all the saints and martyrs by far predates any of our modern Halloween traditions.

Formal observation is said to have begun in Ireland, gradually moving south toward Rome and being made "official" during the 9th century.

Informally, similar celebrations have been part of the life of the church since its early days, with mentions going back as far as 270.

For a church beleaguered with great persecution, such a time of remembrance of those who faithfully professed Christ, even to torture and death, must have been a great encouragement!

Today, All Saints' is celebrated in many Christian traditions worldwide.

What do we do on All Saints?

As a principal feast day, many Anglican churches will celebrate a full eucharistic liturgy on All Saints' Day. It is also common to have Baptisms on All Saints' Day (or the Sunday after Nov. 1). Often, a Liturgy of the Saints will be included to call to mind and give thanks for specific saints, historical and modern.

Symbolizing the shining robes of the martyrs, the liturgical colour for All Saints is white. For personal or family celebration, it's an excellent time to learn about a saint you might not be familiar with, to study the written prayers of saints from church history, and to specifically thank God for the work of those who were instrumental in leading you and others into a profession of faith.

It is an excellent time to remember that "mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won" and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in building up "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church"!

A Collect for All Saints'

From the 2019 BCP:

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of your Son: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.