

ALL SOULS

The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed is a day set aside to remember “ordinary saints.” The day honours those whose life and witness deeply touched our own. Instead of a day of mourning, our remembrance focuses on the hope of the resurrection, both theirs and ours. We give thanks for their faithful testimony.

When is the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed?

In the Anglican tradition, All Souls’ Day is observed on November 2, the day following All Saints’ Day. All Saints’ focuses on those saints whose work and witness affected the history of the larger church body. However, All Souls’ Day is dedicated to the quiet and obscure, those whose faithful, ordinary lives have built up our own lives and our local churches. Like other saints’ days, this is an optional observance.

Where did All Souls’ Day come from?

Originally, the Roman Catholic church observed All Souls’ Day to remember those who had died, particularly within the last year.

As the tradition grew and changed, they included masses for the dead to bring souls out of purgatory.

During the Reformation, these practices were abolished in the Anglican churches. But, many have begun to revive the day as a time to honour loved ones.

What do we do to commemorate the faithful departed?

Although there is no formal service, many choose to visit or decorate the gravesites of these “ordinary saints.”

In our family, we plan a simple dinner, set the table with all in white, and add a long line of white candles. Before we eat, we lift up a prayer of thanksgiving for “all those who have departed this life in the certain hope of the resurrection.” For each remembrance, we light a candle.

I was amazed at how quickly all the candles were lit, and we were still calling to mind good friends in the faith! While we ate, we had a sweet time of sharing favourite memories of these dear ones.

A Collect for All Souls’ Day

From *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, 1994:

O God, the Maker, and Redeemer of all believers: Grant to the faithful departed the unsearchable benefits of the passion of your Son; that on the day of his appearing they may be manifested as your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Additional Prayers for the Faithful Departed

114. For All Faithful Departed

Almighty God, with whom the souls of the faithful who have departed this life are in joy and felicity: We praise and magnify your holy Name for all your servants who have finished their course in your faith and fear; and we most humbly pray that, at the day of resurrection, we and all who are members of the mystical body of your Son may be set on his right hand, and hear his most joyful voice: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Grant this, O merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen (BCP 2019, p. 679).

125. For the Saints and Faithful Departed

We give thanks to you, O Lord our God, for all your servants and witnesses of time past: for Abraham, the father of believers, and Sarah, his wife; for Moses, the lawgiver, and Aaron, the priest; for Miriam and Joshua, Deborah and Gideon, and Samuel with Hannah, his mother; for David, King over Israel; for Isaiah and all the prophets; for Mary, the mother of our Lord; for Peter and Paul and all the apostles; for Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene; for Stephen, the first martyr, and all the martyrs and saints in every age and in every land. In your mercy, O Lord our God, give us, as you gave to them, the hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the first-born of many from the dead. Amen (BCP 2019, p. 683).