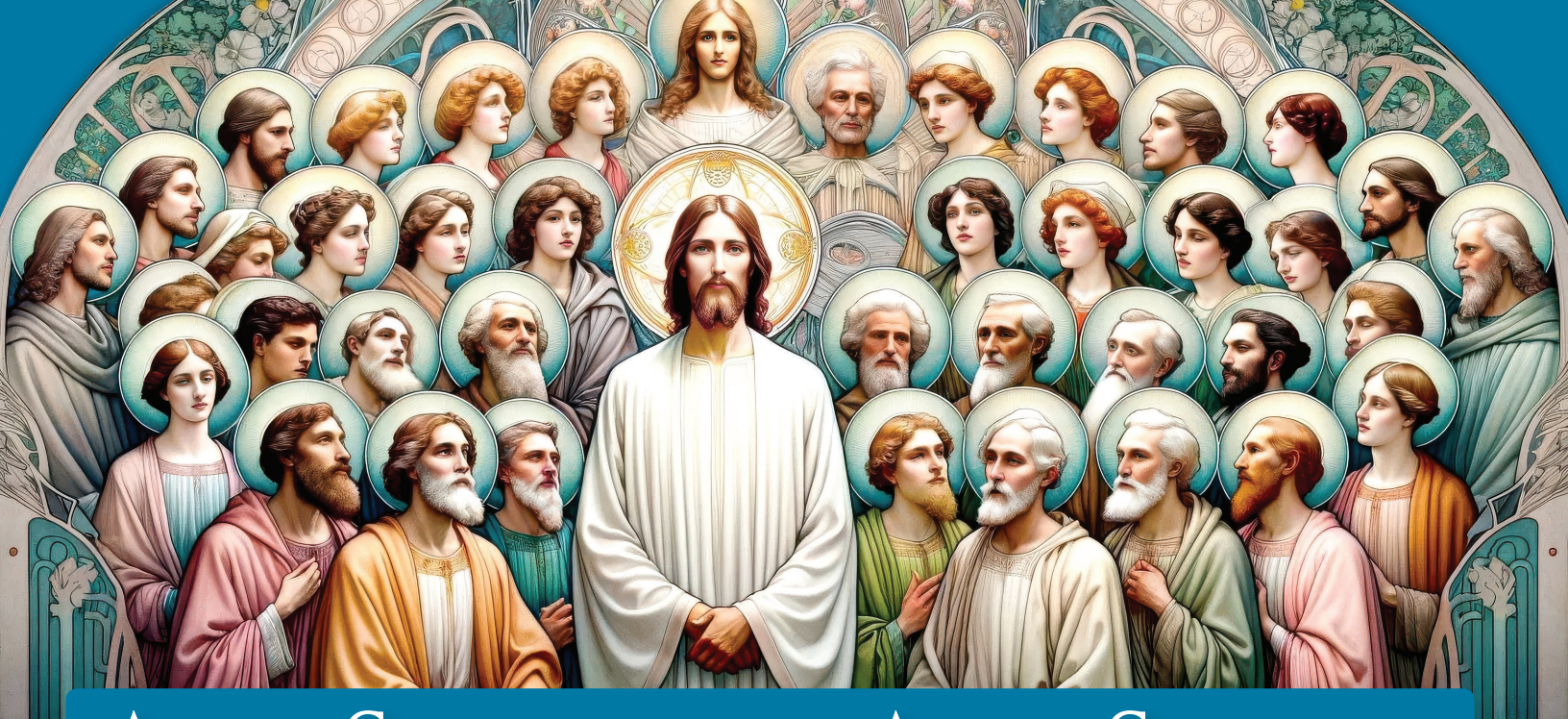




ALL SAINTS & ALL SOULS

Remembering Our Beloved

The Church has always respected the early witnesses, or *martyrs*, who died for their Christian faith. The history of the Church has many stories about the faith of these martyrs. They were rather like heroes and their stories have been good examples for all Christians throughout history. The Church later *canonized* many of the holy people whose names and stories were known. This meant that the Church formally recognized that their lives were holy by naming them as saints and enrolling them in the official list of saints.

However, there were thousands more early Christian martyrs and holy persons who were not canonized by the Church. In order to honor the memory of these unnamed saints, the Church dedicated a special feast day. This feast that we now know as **All Saints Day** started out as the feast of All Martyrs in the 4th century. Sometime between 731 and 741, Pope Gregory III fixed November 1 as the day dedicated to the honor of all saints.



All Souls' Day, on November 2nd, is a day of remembrance for friends and loved ones who have passed away, and purposely follows All Saints' Day in order to move the focus from the saints to ordinary people. Because not all the dead were being honored on All Saints Day, this day was set aside on which the dead awaiting entry to heaven in *purgatory* could benefit from the prayers of the living. The feast day itself is rooted in the second century. In the 10th century, St. Odilo of Cluny established a memorial of all the faithful departed. Rome added the feast to the Church's liturgical calendar in the 13th century.



The feast of All Souls reminds us of our mortality. We are all finite, mortal creatures. We are all loved by God, who has endowed us with an immortal soul. Our ultimate destiny lies in God's hands, and even death does not separate us from God's love.



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◆ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ◆

What is the Litany of the Saints?

The Litany of the Saints is one of the oldest prayers in continuous use in the Catholic Church. Most commonly recited on All Saints Day, forms of it were used as early as the third century, and the litany as we know it today was largely in place by the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604).

What is Purgatory?

Purgatory is a time of purification for those who die in God's grace but lack the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. Purgatory, then, can be said to be the final phase of Christ's applying to us the purifying redemption that he accomplished for us by his death on the cross.

What is the Communion of Saints?

The communion of saints is the spiritual solidarity which binds together the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven who all share a common salvation in Christ. Those who have passed from this world into Christ's presence at death share the same salvation as believers who are alive today and as those who will come after us in the future.

What is intercessory prayer?

Intercessory prayer is prayer on behalf of another person. Catholics believe that we can pray for one another just as we can ask the saints to pray for us. In the same way, we can pray for those in purgatory. Intercession is an important reminder of the Communion of Saints.

What is Canonization?

Canonization is the process by which the Church recognizes that a person is united with God in heaven and may be publicly invoked as an example and witness to other Christians. Since the 10th century, canonization has been regulated by the Vatican. The pope has the authority to canonize a person, usually after a lengthy process to determine whether or not the candidate lived a life of "extraordinary virtue."

How is Halloween Related to All Saints?

The celebration of All Saints' Day on November 1 began as a feast day commemorating all martyrs, confessors and virgins, including those whose names were not known. It was originally celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost, and the Eastern Church still observes this date. In the Western Church, the date was changed to November 1 in order to counter pagan festivals held to appease the dangerous evil spirits associated with the coming of winter and darkness. The customs associated with these pagan celebrations are still visible in the secular observance of Halloween. The word "hallow" is an old English word for a holy person or saint. Thus "Halloween" means "All Hallows' Eve," i.e., the evening before All Saints' Day.

What is a Saint?

Saints, generally speaking, are those who follow Jesus Christ and live their lives according to his teaching.

The word *saint* literally means *holy*, and, in the New Testament, *saint* referred to all who believed in Jesus Christ and followed his teachings.

The meaning of the word began to change as Christianity began to spread and it became clear that some Christians lived lives of extraordinary, or heroic, virtue. The word *saint* thus became more narrowly applied to these persons who became models of holiness. Eventually, the Church created a process called *canonization* in which such venerable people could be officially recognized as saints.

Most of the saints have gone through this formal process of canonization. Others, such as St. Peter and St. Paul, received the title through acclamation, or the universal recognition of their holiness.

The Church urges us to venerate the saints, not worship them as we do God alone, by asking them to intercede on our behalf with God.



"And we are united with all the saints: not only the most well known, from the calendar, but also those "next door", our family members and acquaintances who are now part of that great multitude. Therefore, today is a family celebration. The saints are close to us, indeed they are our truest brothers and sisters. They understand us, love us, know what is truly good for us, help us and await us. They are happy and want us to be happy with them in paradise."

—Pope Francis