

universal. The first reference to a general feast celebrating all saints occurs in Saint Ephrem the Syrian (d. AD 373). Saint John Chrysostom (d. AD 407) assigned a day to the feast, the first Sunday after Pentecost, where in the Eastern Churches the feast is celebrated to this day. In the West, this date was probably originally used, and then the feast was moved to May 13<sup>th</sup>. The current observance (November 1) probably originates from the time of Pope Gregory III (d. AD 741), and was likely first observed on November 1<sup>st</sup> in Germany. This fact makes the connection of the All Saints Feast with the pagan festival Samhain less likely, since Samhain was an *Irish* pagan feast, rather than German.

The origin of the festival of All Saints being celebrated originally on May 13 dates to Pope Boniface IV who in 609 or 610, consecrated the Pantheon at Rome to the Blessed Virgin and all the martyrs; the feast of the *dedicatio Sanctae Mariae ad Martyres* has been celebrated at Rome ever since. There is evidence that from the fifth through the seventh centuries there existed in certain places and at sporadic intervals a feast date May 13 to celebrate the holy martyrs. The origin of the Feast cannot be traced with any certainty, because it has been observed on various days in different places. However, there are some who maintain the belief that it has origins in the pagan observation of May 13, the Feast of the Lemures, in which the malevolent and restless spirits of the dead were propitiated. Liturgiologists base the idea that this Lemuria festival was the origin of that of All Saints on their identical dates and on the similar theme of "all the dead".

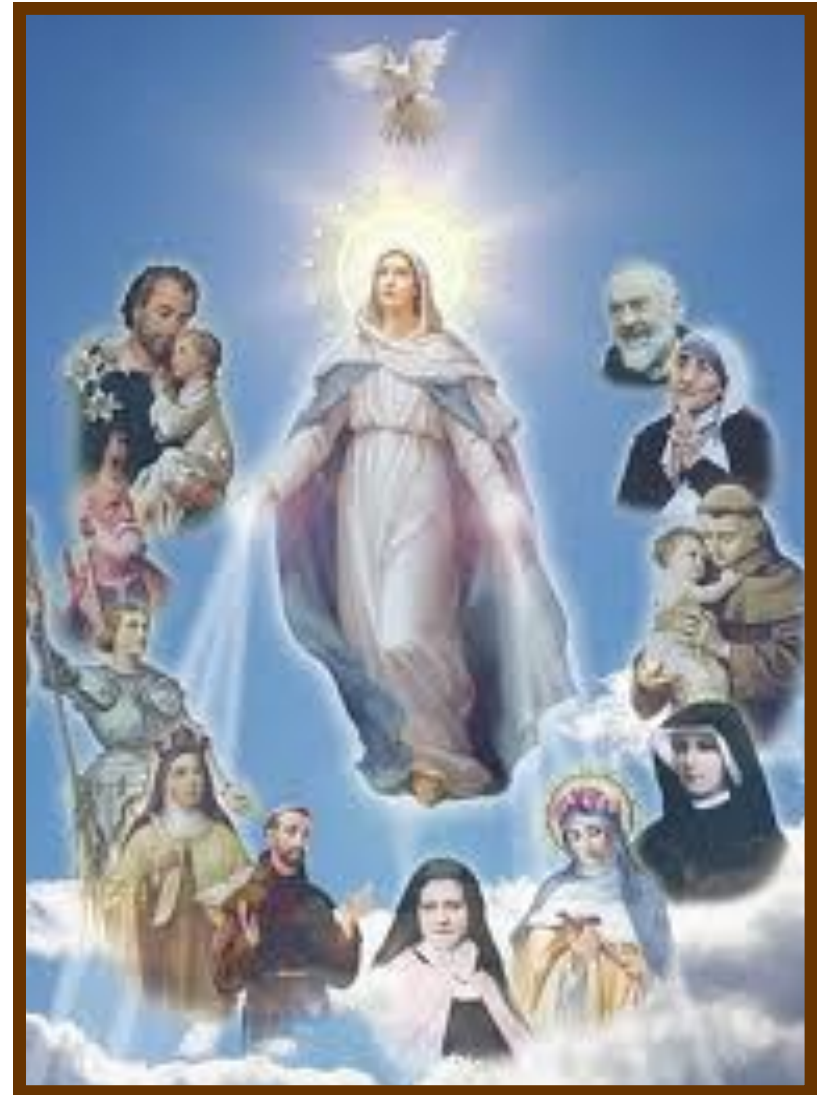
In the Roman Catholic Church, All Saints' Day is a Holy Day of Obligation in many countries, meaning going to Mass on the date is required unless one has a good reason to be excused from that obligation, such as illness. However, in a number of countries, the solemnity of All Saints' Day is transferred to the adjacent Sunday if November 1st, falls on a Monday or a Saturday, while in the same circumstances in the United States the Solemnity is still celebrated on November 1st, but the obligation to attend mass is abrogated.

\* (excerpted from: [www.churchyear.net](http://www.churchyear.net); [//en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org))

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# All Saints Day

**FEAST DAY: NOVEMBER 1ST**



## All Saints Day

\*Every day in the Church calendar has a saint day, but the Solemnity of All Saints is when the Church honors all saints, known and unknown. There are many unknown or unsung saints, who have been forgotten, or never been specifically honored. On All Saints Day, we celebrate these saints of the Lord, and ask for their prayers and intercessions. The whole concept of All Saints Day is tied in with the concept of the Communion of Saints. This is the belief that all of God's people, in heaven, on earth, and in the state of purification (called Purgatory in the West), are connected in a communion. In other words, Catholic and Orthodox Christians believe that the saints of God are just as alive as you and I, and are constantly interceding on our behalf. Remember, our connection with the saints in heaven is one grounded in a tight-knit communion. The saints are not divine, nor omnipresent or omniscient. However, because of our common communion with and through Jesus Christ, our prayers are joined with the heavenly community of Christians. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 350) testifies to this belief.

We mention those who have fallen asleep: first the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition... (Catechetical Lecture 23:9).

The Catholic Catechism concisely describes the communion among believers, by which we are connected to Christ and thus to one another:

"Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.

...as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as if its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself: We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because

of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples (CCC 956, 957)."

There are thousands of canonized saints, that is those individuals officially recognized by the Church as holy men and women worthy of imitation. Because miracles have been associated with these people, and their lives have been fully examined and found holy by the Church, we can be assured they are prime examples of holiness, and powerful intercessors before God on our behalf. There are also many patron saints, guardians or protectors of different areas and states of life. For instance, Saint Vitus is the patron saint against oversleeping, and Saint Joseph of Cupertino is the patron saint of air travelers. It may sound unusual to have a patron saint against oversleeping, but keep in mind that the Church has something meaningful for every area of our human lives. All these saints are celebrated throughout the year, as many have their own feast days (for instance, Saint Hilary of Poitiers, whose feast day is celebrated on January 14).

Christians have been honoring their saints and martyrs since at least the second century AD. The Martyrdom of Polycarp probably written near the middle of the second century, attests to this reality:

Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more pure than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, so that when being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps (18).

Initially the calendars of saints and martyrs varied from location to location, and many times local churches honored local saints. However, gradually feast days became more