

## All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day

St. Matthew Episcopal Church at Browns Point

In our Christian faith, we believe in life after death. All Saints' Day (always November 1<sup>st</sup>) is the last of seven "High Holy" feast days in the Church Year. On this day, we celebrate all those who have died in the Faith who are formally recognized in the Church calendar for their witness. All Souls' Day (always November 2<sup>nd</sup>) is the day the Church recognizes all who have died in the Faith (and those whose faith is known to God alone) who are not formally recognized in the Church calendar. For both days, it marks a special time of year when we remember the "thin space" between life and death as we are called to remember the special witnesses of God's love in our own lives through those who have gone before us. This year, we will celebrate these special days with our All Saints'/All Souls' Drive-Thru event at St. Matthew on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup> between 10:30 am and 11:00 am.

The tradition of All Saints' Day started in the 9<sup>th</sup> century when Pope Gregory IV declared the whole Church to celebrate the Feast of All Saints' Day, though this declaration was the culmination of centuries of local celebrations where local traditions that acknowledged the interplay between life and death with fall harvesting came into contact with the Church. One of the most famous examples of pre-Christian festivities occurred amongst the Celtic people in Ireland where people wore costumes and lit bonfires to ward off spirits who were thought to come back in the autumn to haunt the living. With the arrival of Christians through the spread of the Roman Empire, over the course of centuries, local customs would eventually become interwoven with Christian teaching creating new traditions while keeping some old roots.

One such tradition is our practice of Halloween. The word Halloween comes from its traditional name: All Hallows' Eve. This is in reference to All Saints' Day being All Hallows' Day, or All "Holy Ones" Day. Halloween means Hallows' E'ven, or the evening before All Hallows' Day. Hallow means holy, which refers to the word Saint, which means "sanctified one". We actually use the word hallow frequently if we pray the traditional Lord's Prayer when we say, "Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed* [or "Holy"] be thy name...." Since All Saints' Day is always on November 1<sup>st</sup>, All Hallows' Eve takes place on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Some of the traditions of the old Celtic festival, such as dressing up in costumes, continue today on Halloween. The tradition of "trick or treat" started later when poor people went from door to door of rich people to receive food (and treats) in exchange of a promise to pray for the souls of the homeowners' dead relatives. Eventually, this tradition changed and children were expected to do tricks and jokes in order to get the treats.

However you celebrate this is a special time of year, it is a time to remember that, for Christians, death and fear do not have the final answer and, through Christ's Resurrection, we are called to be a people of light and hope in the midst of darkness. So, remember a loved one who has gone before. Light a candle with a picture and eat a favorite dish. Dress up and have some sweets. Along with the great cloud of witnesses, God's love surrounds us all even in death and that is what we celebrate during All Saints' tide.



**For a more kid-friendly lesson, watch  
"History of Halloween for Kids":**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyxadwwT2IE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyxadwwT2IE)

## **Collects for All Saints' Tide:**

### **All Hallows' Eve** *October 31*

Almighty and everliving God, you have made all things in your wisdom and established the boundaries of life and death: Grant that we may obey your voice in this world, and in the world to come may enjoy that rest and peace which you have appointed for your people; through Jesus Christ who is Resurrection and Life, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **All Saints' Day** *November 1*

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: 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.*

### **All Souls' Day** *November 2*

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.*

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## ***El Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead***

Christians in parts of Mexico and Central America keep All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2) with special devotions to honor the dead and pray for them. These devotions have spread beyond their geographical origins in Mexico into other languages and cultures. For those who are observing this tradition for the first time, adapt it to your own needs and consider engaging in conversation with communities or individuals that have experience with this tradition.

Communities who observe El Día de los Muertos should consider the following principles:

1. Practices for keeping the Day include adornment of an altar or a sacred space to offer reverence for the dead, which may be placed in a home, church, or cemetery. Photographs of those being remembered are traditionally displayed. A place for prayer may be provided nearby.
2. Devotions may include prayers and thanksgivings for the dead. Resources for prayers may be found in the burial rites or the propers for All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.