

## All Souls (All Faithful Departed)

*Observed 2 November*



The Feast of All Saints is a traditional day for baptisms, when we welcome new members into the Communion of Saints, the family of God. It is a day when we remember all of the people whose lives of faith have inspired us and others down the millennia of Christian history. This day is followed by All Souls Day, when we remember all of the people who have gone before us to the larger life with God. It is a day set aside to pray for the dead and to remember the promises that Christ 'will be with us always even to the end of the ages'. As All Saints is often flamboyant and joyful, All Souls tends to be quieter, sometimes more somber. Until recently it was traditional to wear black vestments for this celebration. They might be quite rich, made of satin or velvet and embroidered all over with silver, but they were nonetheless somber. The black symbolized our mortality, the inescapable fact that the end of all life is death. In recent years custom has shifted so that for this service, as for funerals, we wear white, focusing on resurrection, on Christ's promise of new life in him. The practice of having this day to pray for the dead is more than a thousand years old in the Western Church. Orthodox churches have as many as seven Saturdays during the year set aside to pray for the departed. Our hope and belief that life does not end with the death of our physical body gives us reason to continue to pray for those we love who have preceded

us in death. In some cultures, this practice has expanded into dramatic celebrations. Los dias de los muertos in Mexico includes the feasts of All Saints and All Souls, with prayers being offered for children and babies on the first and for adults on the second. These celebrations can include parades and elaborate altars of memorial, as well as costumes, special skeleton- style foods, and flamboyant decorations. Here 'laughing in the face of death' is combined with devout prayers for those who have died. Death is a reality we all face. Our bonds of love with our family and friends are not broken at death and need to be continually honored in prayer.

*Lessons*      Wisdom 3:1-9 *or* Isaiah 25:5-9; Psalm 130 *or* 116:10-17; I Thessalonians 4:13-18 *or* I Corinthians 15:50-58; John 5:24-27

*Collect*      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.*