

Reflection for All Souls Day

On Saturday, November 1, 2025, we celebrated the *Feast of All Saints*, this day is also known as *All Hallows Day*. The *Feast of All Saints* is not only celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church, but it is also celebrated by the Anglican Communion, the Methodist Church, and the Lutheran Church. The Church has celebrated the *Feast of All Saints* as far back as the 4th century, but at that time the Feast was celebrated on May 13. By the 8th century the Feast had been moved to November 1, which is the current day that it is celebrated on.

We can find the intention and the meaning of the *Feast of All Saints* in the actions of Pope Boniface IV, when in the year 609 he dedicated the Pantheon in Rome as a Catholic Church in honor of the Blessed Virgin and all the Martyrs. *All Saints Day* was expanded from a Feast for Mary and the Martyrs to include all the Saints by Pope Gregory III in the 8th century. Pope Boniface IV and Pope Gregory III felt it was important to have a day to remember and reflect on all the Saints who have gone before us in faith.

When I was ordained a priest a childhood friend, Joe gave me a book with the title *Dictionary of Patron Saints' Names*. This book was written by Fr. Thomas W. Sheehan, and it contains 14,000 names of Saints. Joe informed me when he gave me the book that he was giving the book to me so that I would know that I am not alone in my journey of faith. With 14,000 people that have already taken the journey and the path that we are on, how could we be alone? Joe and I got a good laugh when he gave me the book, but it was and is a very thoughtful gift. I will have to admit over the years I have used the book countless times and at this point the binding is broken, and pages tend to fall out but it is still a very useful book. Several years ago, a very kind parishioner gave me a replacement for this book, but I still have the one that Joe gave me. I tend to use the replacement book when I meet with parents to discuss and arrange the baptism of their child.

At this point you might be thinking, was not *All Saints Day* on November 1, 2025, but today is November 2, 2025, and it is *All Souls Day*. If you are thinking this, you would be correct. Today November 2, 2025, is *All Souls Day*, and this Feast dates to the 11th Century when Abbot Odilo of Cluny encouraged all Monasteries to remember in Mass all there departed Monks on November 2 the day after the *Feast of All Saints*. By the 13th Century the *Feast of All Souls Day* had become a universal Feast, embraced by not just by Abbeys and Monasteries throughout the Catholic World, but by the average parishioner, who embraced the day to remember their loved ones in prayer. *All Souls Day* is clearly a part of the Catholic Faith, but this Feast is also celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church and the Anglican Communion. Over the centuries many traditions have developed on *All Souls Day* ranging from gathering in homes to visiting the cemetery, but all these traditions are focused on remembering our loved ones and praying for them. Here in our Parish, every year we have a *Book of Remembrance* that has the names of loved ones that parishioners have requested to be remembered in the month of November. This book is placed in front the statue of our Lady of the Rosary that is in the narthex of our Church. The *Feast Day of All Souls* which started in the 11th Century in France, is connected to the tradition of *All Saints Day* that started in Rome in the 6th Century. For just as the early Church remembered the Martyrs and Saints that have gone before us in faith, we on *All Souls Day* remember our loved ones that have passed away.

For me *All Saints Day* always seemed to be a very public celebration of the lives of the Saints. These holy men and women that inspire us and intercede on our behalf, can and should be an important part of our daily journey of faith. *All Souls Day*, while it is a public celebration, always seems to me to be more personal and private. It is on *All Souls Day* that we pray for all who have passed away. We just like that monks of the 11th Century, remember our loved ones who have passed away. Being thankful to God for the time we were blessed to have them in this world, and looking forward to being reunited with them in the Heavenly Kingdom.