

All Saints -

On the feast of All Saints, we rejoice in God's promise of the resurrection. We hope that one day we will share in the company of the saints in heaven and sing glory to God in the highest.

Apocalypse 7:2-4. 9-14

The apostle John sees a vision of the life in heaven.

Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes show the way to become holy.

Reflection



At first there was Jesus. Then came people who died, like Jesus, doing the Father's will, the one's we call 'martyrs'. They were honoured as heroes in the struggles of the early church. In fact, because of the terrible persecutions by the Emperors, there were so many martyrs that about the year 397 the church arranged a special day, first Sunday after Pentecost, as a day to celebrate **all** the martyrs. Then, about 300 years later, Pope Boniface IV gathered up about 28 wagonloads of bones of the martyrs. He interred them under the Pantheon, a Roman temple that had been dedicated to all the gods. The Pope rededicated

it to the ‘all the martyrs’. According to Venerable Bede, the Pope intended “that the memory of all the saints might in the future be honoured in the place which had formerly been dedicated to the worship not of gods but of demons.”

Another pope, Pope Gregory III, consecrated a new chapel at St. Peter’s in Rome to ‘all the saints’; he included not just **martyrs**, but people who **risked** martyrdom by boldly **confessing** their faith in the face of persecution & opposition—what we call the **confessors**. Eventually holy monks and hermits, and men and women who led heroic lives were added. A 100 years later Pope Gregory IV fixed the celebration for all saints of **every variety** on Nov 1 - and for last 1200 years we’ve been doing just that.

As you probably know we Christians, following our Jewish roots, always beginning a feast the evening before. That’s why we have the eve of All Saints. They called it “eve of all the blessed – the eve of all the hallows” “all hallows eve” or, as we say it, “Halloween”. As you know, that hallowed eve has completely lost its religious roots; now we’ve got witches and hobgoblins instead of saints. It has become, like so many things in our day, a lucrative commercial enterprise; so much so, that Halloween is financially second only to the great Christian feast of Christmas.

Anyway, when Halloween is over; when our tricks and treats are over; when our money is spent; we’re here, much to our credit, not as consumers, but as **Catholics** giving testimony, by our being here, to the original meaning of it all. We’re the people who just know there is something more to life than the latest car or the most up-to-the-minute fashion. We know that there have been, and are, flesh and blood people like ourselves who decided (sometimes after living less than Christian lives) to live a **countercultural** life. It certainly wasn’t easy for these saints (canonised or not) but they had a deep joy and probably laughed often; we envy them for their integrity.

They say: “A saint is someone who **loves** people and **uses** things. A sinner is someone loves **things** and uses **people**.” I think that’s very true. Even more profound: “A saint is someone through whom we catch a glimpse of what **God** is like—and what **we’re** called to be.”

Most saints started off on the road to sainthood by the example of other saints. Most of them were touched by what they heard and saw in other people.



We should remember that when Mass is celebrated the attendance here isn't limited to the people who happen to turn up (or get in!) on a particular day. Countless angels of heaven and all the saints are here; perhaps especially those celebrated on their particular day, usually the day of their death or as the Church has it: the day they were born into a new life.

This is reflected in the ancient Roman Eucharistic Prayer (Eucharistic Prayer I). The list of Saints in it may strike you as a bit odd.

Before the consecration, the Blessed Virgin Mary is mentioned **first**. Then St Peter, linked of course with St Paul + 10 other Apostles (Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon & Thaddeus). Matthias, the Apostle chosen by lot after the death of Judas Iscariot, is missing - he's mentioned in the list **after** the consecration.

At the earlier point (before the consecration) the 12 Apostles (counting St Paul, **the** Apostle, as he became known) are balanced by 12 more saints, **all martyrs**.

All Saints' Day



In the earliest centuries, martyrdom, which literally means "witness", was closely associated with the holiest act, the Eucharist. Mass would be celebrated in the Catacombs at the burial place of the martyrs; they were, in this way, very much part of making a bridge between heaven and earth, which is what the Mass is.

The first five of these martyrs are early Popes: Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus & Cornelius. Then comes St Cyprian. He actually had a big row with the Pope of his day, but was reconciled - by being martyred.

Next comes Lawrence. He was a model deacon; the one who was asked by the Emperor to produce the treasure of the Church – he brought along the poor of Rome: ‘here is the treasure of the Church!’ After him, you’ve got five laymen: Chrysogonus, John & Paul, Cosmas & Damian. Not many people know much about them. They were all connected to the Church of Rome, which is where this Eucharistic Prayer was first developed. There’s a church in Trastevere, just west of the Tiber, probably from about the fourth century dedicated to the next one: **St Chrysogonus**. Then **John & Paul**; they were martyrs and they’re venerated were they were buried in a church on the Caelian Hill in Rome; that Church was built by a man called Pammachius, a friend of St Jerome's in the fourth century. He built the Church in his large house.

Next **Cosmas & Damian**, you may have heard of them; they were both good doctors. There’s a mosaic in a sixth-century church in Rome that’s dedicated to

Cosmas & Damian; this mosaic shows them being presented to Christ in majesty by St Peter & St Paul.

After the consecration, we've got the following saints: John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter.

John is John the Baptist, **Stephen** the first martyr, (the account of his death is in chapters six and seven of the Acts of the Apostles). Then **Matthias**, as we've said, the Apostle chosen to replace Judas.

St Barnabas is also in the Acts of the Apostles; he was the one who persuaded the other Apostles to trust St Paul, and later, invited Paul to work in Antioch.

Antioch soon had as its own bishop (he's next on the list): **Ignatius**. The state authorities sent him to Rome to be martyred about 110 AD. On the way he wrote a series of letters, looking forward to being, as he said: "ground like corn by the teeth of the lions".

All we know for certain about **Alexander** is his martyrdom. **Marcellinus**, was priest, and the final one, **Peter**, an exorcist; those two were martyred in 304 AD and they share the same feast day.

Next we come to the ladies: seven women (Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia & Anastasia) all martyrs. **Felicity & Perpetua** were killed in 203 AD and the account of their brave death is authentic and interesting. What's called 'The Passion of St Perpetua' is actually in print in a paperback.

St Agatha is a martyr from Sicily. In Ravenna there are lovely sixth-century mosaics of the next three of these women martyrs: **Cecilia & Lucy, & Agnes** – who's symbol is the Lamb.

Archbishops are given what's called a 'Pallium' by the Pope – it's a kind of woollen scarf of office. The wool is woven from the wool of lambs blessed in Rome each year on St Agnes's Day. The final saint, Anastasia, has had a church in Rome, since the 4th century.

So – 39 Saints in all in that ancient Roman Eucharistic Prayer. Some of them from New Testament Scriptures, others because of the devotion of the early Church in Rome. **St Joseph** was added in 1962.

All these saints and all the other saints we remember today are part of the **unity** there is between **us**, the Church struggling on earth, and the Church triumphant in heaven.

WORDSEARCH

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THE COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

For believers, life is changed at death, not ended. The souls of the just who lived out the Paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising share in his eternal life. All the faithful live in hope of enjoying the fullness of life with Jesus. Today, we

join with our departed loved ones in their celebration of victory over death.

Historically, praying for the dead dates as far back as the Old Testament (2 Maccabees 12:42-46). The idea of setting apart a special day of intercession for the faithful departed was first established in 998, and it soon spread. November 2nd is still the main liturgical celebration, but the entire month of November is dedicated to prayer for the faithful departed. Lists of names of the people to be remembered are placed near the altar on which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

Please note that, almost certainly, we won't have room for everyone on Monday at Mass. We can't bear having to close the doors - but if the Church is closed, it means the permissible number has been reached – we have to keep the instructions if we want to stay open.

Nigeria



Pope Francis, this week, appealed for an end to violence in Nigeria after reciting the Angelus on Sunday. Speaking from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square on October 25th, the Pope said he prayed that peace would be restored "through the promotion of justice and the common good."

He said:

"I follow with particular concern the news coming from Nigeria about the recent violent clashes between law enforcement agencies and some young protesters."

"We pray to the Lord that all forms of violence will always be avoided, in the constant search for social harmony through the promotion of justice and the common good."

Protests against police brutality erupted in Africa's most populous country on October 7th. Demonstrators called for the abolition of a police unit known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The Nigerian Police Force, on October 11th, said that it would disband SARS, but demonstrations continued. Armed men opened fire on protesters on October 20th in the capital, Lagos, killing at least 12 people, according to Amnesty International. Nigeria's army denied responsibility for the deaths.

Nigerian police said on Saturday that they would "use all legitimate means to halt a further slide into lawlessness," amid looting and further street violence.

Around 20 million of Nigeria's 206 million population are Catholics.