ALL SAINTS DAY, 2026

On All Saints Day, the Church solemnly honors all of those human beings who now share fully in Divine Life, by the mercy of God abundantly poured out through the human race's savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. A very few of these are honored by name by the entire Catholic Church. A few others are honored by particular local churches. The great majority have never been "canonized," or put on the Church's list of recognized saints. The great majority are known only to God. Today, whoever they are, we honor all of them.

All of God's Saints bask in and eternally celebrate the goodness of God. They perpetually praise God, and today we join our praise to theirs. As with the feast days, memorials, and commemorations of individual saints, today we give supreme honor and true adoration to God alone. It is by the work of His Grace that all of the Saints became holy. They cooperated with His Grace, but the power that makes them holy is not their good works but God's good Grace. In a sense, we do pray to the Saints, but only to ask them to pray for us. We ask our fellow Christians on earth to pray for us. To Catholics, it seems supremely reasonable and wise to ask our brothers and sisters in Heaven to pray for us also. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but they, beholding God as he truly is, pray to Him perfectly. We honor all of the Saints today. Through them, we honor Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, Whose saving Death and Resurrection makes them saints. Through Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, we honor God, Who so loved the world that He sent His only Son to accomplish our forgiveness and our sanctification.

God's glorious Saints, the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother, come from every race and nation. Some lived for many years in this world, and some for only a short time. Some were famous on this earth, and some were not. Among them there are soldiers, merchants and judges. Among them are clergy, monks, nuns, spouses, and bachelors. Among them are the rich and the poor. In all of these walks of life, people who cooperate with God's Grace, poured out through Jesus Christ, can become Saints

The Saints cooperated with God in all of the various circumstances of their lives. In prosperity and in poverty, in sickness and in health, in success and in failure, they cooperated with God's saving Grace until this life ended. It is through their hopeful acceptance and use of all of those conditions that they became saints. They did not flee to distant mountain tops, except to receive rest and refreshment to resume fighting the good fight. In all the states and situations of life, they kept the Faith.

It bears repeating that the ceremonies of "beatification" and "canonization" are only external ceremonies by which the Church solemnly and gratefully recognizes the powerful ways in which God has worked in the lives of concrete human beings, honoring also their consistent, and sometimes heroic, cooperation with His work. Those ceremonies authorize public religious honor to the Saints. They do not make someone a Saint. To make someone truly holy is a work of the Lord, His own work. Ceremonies of "beatification" and "canonization" only declare that His work is wonderful in our eyes.

The publicly recognized saints had a variety of vocations on this earth. On the feast of All Saints, we proclaim thankfully how the unknown Saints of Heaven have lived and worked on this earth in various guises. There are popes among them, but there are also obscure parish priests. There are monks and nuns among them, but there are also husbands and fathers, wives and mothers. There are rulers among them, and there are servants as well. Some had what might be called a distinctive personal spirituality, but many just said the prayers and performed the observances of good Catholics, aware that all the teaching of Heaven is contained, in a seed form, in the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, and the Apostles' Creed. To pray those thoughtfully and feelingly can be a full spiritual life all by itself. Some were involved in public and community affairs, but many just loved their families, friends and neighbors. That is enough.

There is a road map to Heaven, the Holy Gospels. If you know the Gospels, you know how to become a Saint. There is one passport to Heaven, the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ. If you call upon that Name, you will be saved. There is one power to carry us to Heaven, the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection. If that saving Mystery is part of your life, you will be carried into Heaven. While mystical, holiness is hardly mysterious. Holiness is

hearing the word of Jesus Christ and believing it, receiving the saving Grace of Jesus Christ, and then doing what He tells us to do. Impossible for human beings alone, it is surely possible with God, and with God, it is simple. Listen to Jesus Christ, receive Jesus Christ, obey Jesus Christ.

The great and beautiful feast of All Saints suffers from being connected with the noise of the weird, unofficial pop culture festival called "Halloween." Most of "Halloween's" silliness really isn't very ancient. Only in late 19th America did Halloween get connected to buying lots of candy and pretending to be scared of things that go bump in the night; and only in late 20th Century America did "Halloween" get connected to bloody minded and nearly mindless movies. "Halloween" simply meant the evening before All Hallows, or All Saints Day; and All Saints Day wasn't originally a Fall or Autumn feast at all.

Just as the Roman Church had Christmas as one of its original feasts, so the Syrian Church had All Saints as one of its original feasts, celebrated on May 13. The Greek Church quickly adopted the feast of All Saints, but decided to celebrate it on the Sunday after Pentecost. In 609, Pope Boniface IV decided to celebrate the Feast of All Saints in Rome, sticking with Syrian the date of May 13. By that time, the Irish Church had already decided to celebrate All Saints' Day, choosing April 17 or April 20. It was the English Church that decided to make this feast a Fall or Autumn festival, setting the date of November 1. In the lands that were becoming France and Germany, all of the local churches decided that they liked this new English idea and, under French and German influence, the Roman Church eventually gave in and moved the feast of All Saints from May 13 to November 1.

I don't want to complain about the feast moving to November 1, which it had done by 800 A.D. I don't think that those early English had a bad idea. The Autumn is not a bad time to think and pray about the "Four Last Things.": death, judgment, Heaven, and hell. We will all die to this world. We will all be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ. If our lives have amounted to a free and deliberate rejection of Him, hell is our lot. If our lives have included some real openness to Him and His message of Salvation, even the half unconscious openness of worshiping God as best we can and living as best we are able, with the help of a divine Grace we only dimly recognize, we will enter the perfect happiness of Heaven, which the Lord Jesus purchased for all men with His most Precious Blood. Autumn is a good time for remembering and renewing our desire to go to Heaven. It isn't having the feast of All Saints Day in Fall that has messed it up. It is what, sadly, America has done with "Halloween" that has messed it up. First, in the late 19th Century half forgotten folk tales were revived and repackaged as an excuse for selling a lot of candy and having some costume parties. Silly, but mostly harmless. Much worse, in late 20th America, movie makers repackaged those half forgotten folk tales again, making them dark and repulsive for the twisted film genre they call "horror." Well, my advice is observe All Saints Day, and ignore Halloween. Maybe it can be salvaged, but I doubt it. In any case, be sure to observe All Saints Day, and praise the Lord, wonderful in His Saints.

Don't just admire the Saints. Recognize in their lives proof of the power of Jesus Christ to be active in the lives of ordinary people, making them extraordinary in Faith, ,Hope, and Love. As they pray for us, the Saints help us to cooperate with the Grace of Jesus Christ so as to become Saints ourselves. The Feast of All Saints celebrates the saving work of Jesus Christ made visible on earth, through His Spirit dwelling in His Saints, and doing wonderful things with them and through them.