

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH



**NOVEMBER 6, 2016 – TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (C): ALL SAINTS' DAY**

All Saints' Day, celebrated November 1 or the nearest Sunday afterward, is characterized by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) as a Principal Feast, "taking precedence over any other day or observance" (BCP 15). The day is set aside to remember and commend the saints of God, especially those who are not recognized at other points in the church year.

According to Holy Women, Holy Men, in the tenth century, it became customary to recognize on a single day "that vast body of the faithful who, though no less members of the company of the redeemed, are unknown in the wider fellowship of the Church" (Holy Women, Holy Men, 664). Over time, the day became associated with special remembrances of an individual's family and friends.

While several churches abandoned the commemoration during the Reformation, the Feast of All Saints was retained on the Anglican liturgical calendar. All Saints' Day began to assume the role of general commemoration of the dead: all Christians, past and present; all saints, known and unknown.

Because of the day's association with the remembrance for the dead, many churches publish a necrology. This reading of the names of the congregation's faithful departed may include prayers on their behalf. Such prayers are appropriate, as the Catechism reminds us, "because we still hold [our departed] in our love, and because we trust that in God's presence those who have chosen to serve him will grow in his love, until they see him as he is" (BCP 862).



*Detail from "The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs" (circa 1423-24) by Fra Angelico, National Gallery, London. Photo via Wikimedia.*

The Book of Common Prayer recommends All Saints' Day as one of the four holy days especially appropriate for the administration of Holy Baptism (Holy Women, Holy Men, 662). This recommendation strives to make clear themes of newness of life, our membership in the communion of saints.

Finally, the day is often characterized by joyful hymns, including such favorites as "For All the Saints," "Who Are These Like Stars Appearing," and "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God." These hymns share motifs of rest, fellowship, and continued, joyful service to God—salient indeed on this day, as we remember "those of dazzling brightness, those in God's own truth arrayed, clad in robes of purest whiteness, robes whose luster ne'er shall fade"!

**Collect**

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.