

All Saints and All Souls

The Apostles' Creed ends in this way: "I believe in ... the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen." This confidence is based on Jesus' words in the Gospel of John: "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life."

The season of Allhallowtide is celebrated on All Saints' Eve on 31st October, All Saints' Day on 1st November and All Souls' Day on 2nd November. This is a special time to remember with hope and thankfulness those souls who have gone before us. They are beyond space and time, but still retain their true individuality. God "will wipe every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away".

Those of us left behind when a loved one dies frequently need comfort and reassurance in dark days. Many churches hold All Souls' services on or around 2nd November, when candles are lit and individual names are read out, entrusting the departed to God's care, as we did at their funerals. Every year we move on in our journey of grief, while the sadness can still be acknowledged.

So, is there a difference between Saints and Souls? We think of "saints" as believers who have lived out their faith in good lives, acts of service and often suffering persecution. However, all we need to lead saintly lives is to accept the forgiveness which God offers to us; our everlasting life can start now. Maybe "souls" include those whose faith is known to God alone and who, despite their doubts and fears, also rely on His love and mercy.

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