Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
All Saints/All Souls Day
November 1, 2026
rmcneely+

Today we are in the midst of a three day Christian Holiday from the 9th century that began yesterday.

It's a three day progression originally known as:
All Hallows Eve, All Hallows Day, and All Souls Day.
October 31st,
Nov 1st and
Nov 2nd each year.

The names have changed over the centuries and today we know them as

Halloween, All Saints Day and All Souls Day.
But the significance of these three days remains the same.

For convenience, I have joined All Saints Day with All Souls Day In this one service.

Instituted in the 7th century, All Saints Day was in recognition

that many of God's martyrs from across the world
were unknown,
But nevertheless had given their lives for God,
Just as those whose names and stories we know,
The unknown Saints should be honored as well.

All Souls Day came later, in the late 10th century, from France.

And we remember and we honor the faithful departed, who have gone home to God.
Today here at St Thomas, we take both traditions at once.

Before going much further, let's set our terms.
The word Saint has 4 meanings in our ecclesiastical language.
The people we remember on All Saints Day
Are those nameless who lived and died in grace
and were martyred.
They too, are Saints and we celebrate their lives today.

The people we remember on All Souls Day might not be saints.
But keep in mind the most general meaning of the word:
Saints are people who have set aside a time
and devoted it exclusively to God.
That means people like you, right here and right now.

You have set aside the time and the competing draws on your life and you have come here,
To worship, to receive Christ in the Communion,
(either physically in the chapel or spiritually
in the Church of the Air),
to be together and enjoy the love of God.
That makes you a Saint.
And we think of our dear departed as Saints too.

I must set all this in the context of the real world outside these doors.
Halloween has come to rule the day.
It's roots are pagan.
Most likely from dark Celtic times and beliefs
When people believed in the occult
Witchcraft, evil spells, superstitions and curses.

Halloween has been softened at its surface
And we think of children in harmless costumes,
Candy.
But we still see the undercurrent:
Darkness, haunting, underworld threats,
Evil symbology.
We are tempted by it somehow.

And so in this era of conflict, cultural clash, isolation
disillusionment and violence,
Americans celebrate the darkness of Halloween
Rather than the light of Easter.

The former Archbishop of Paris said:
"The West is born in Christianity.
The crisis of the West is that it isn't Christian anymore."

And so, our fallen culture separates All Hallows Eve
from All Hallows Day.
Halloween from All Saints.
and prefers to focus on the dark side of man
Forgetting the victory of the good
found in the loving hearts of the saints.

Archbishop Morse wrote:
"The problem of freedom
is the choice between good and evil
And is particularly reflected in the Feast of All Saints Day.
When man's understanding is darkened,
He becomes alienated from the life of God.
Today the secular has seized upon the eve, All Hallows Eve
--Halloween
and makes it a celebration of evil and the darkness of night.

The church celebrates the light of day
and makes it a harvest of Heaven; the Saints."

All Souls Day was formerly celebrated by family visits to the graves of their people.
Flowers on gravesites
Stones placed on headstones
Candles in the window.

Our Latin Brothers and Sisters probably do it the best
And have incorporated their religion
into daily culture
and the "Dia de los Muertos" is a national celebration.
Hats off to them
And thanks for enrichening American lives.

Today we remember the departed in our hearts.
In a moment I will read their names.
So that they are remembered and their lives honored.
As I speak the names you have given me
Recall them
Their lives
Their stories
The time you shared
The love that you still share.

In this glorious and precious next hour here at St Thomas'
Let us step away from the darkness
Walk into His Light
Honor and remembrance are the hallmarks of the day.