



# Ghosts and Halloween

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Halloween really all about?

The term *Halloween* comes from *All Hallows' Eve*. A 'hallow' is a saint, and therefore this celebration is the anticipation of All Saints' Day (also known historically as *Hallowmas*), which is always celebrated on November 1<sup>st</sup>. The purpose of **All Hallows' Eve** is to prepare ourselves for All Saints' Day (much in the way that Christmas Eve is meant to help us, in a special way, prepare for Christmas). You can help prepare yourself in several ways: prayer, spiritual devotions, and attending a prayer vigil held at your local parish or Catholic cemetery (and celebrating with a bit of free candy doesn't hurt too). But what are we preparing for? What is All Saints' Day really all about?

**All Saints' Day** is a joyful celebration in honour of all the saints, known and unknown. We believe there is a prayerful spiritual bond between those in heaven and those living on earth. You can celebrate this beautiful day by attending Mass, reconnecting with one or two of your favorite saints in prayer, learning about a new saint, and also by the regular way we celebrate – with good food and loving relationships all around you!

All Saints' Day is always followed by **All Souls' Day**, also known as *The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed* (the third day of the Hallowtide Triduum), which is November 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is a day of prayer for those who have died. Catholics are encouraged to visit one of their Catholic cemeteries to pray for the faithful departed, to remember them, and to give thanks. An All Souls' Day Mass is often celebrated at your local parish or Catholic cemetery.

### Are ghosts real?

This is a difficult and mysterious question to answer, and the Catholic Church has not articulated a definitive position on it, but Fr. Gabriele Amorth, who was the full-time exorcist of the Diocese of Rome for over thirty years, wrote this: "There are no good spirits other than angels; there are no evil spirits other than demons. . . .The souls of the dead who are present during seances...are none other than demons. God allows a [human] soul to return to earth only in very rare, exceptional cases, but we recognize that this subject is still full of unknowns."<sup>1</sup>

Several of these exceptional cases have been documented, many of which appear in the lives of the saints. The life and works of St. Nicholas of Tolentino, for example, provides several examples, such as the following:

*On a particular Saturday night as Nicholas lay down trying to sleep, he heard the voice of Fra Pellegrino of Osimo, a deceased friar whom he had known personally. The friar revealed to Nicholas that he was in purgatory and he begged Nicholas to offer Mass and pray for his soul and the many other Holy Souls to be set free. For a whole week Nicholas every day followed this request and was rewarded with a second vision of Fra Pellegrino who gave thanks and assured Nicholas that a great deal of souls were now enjoying the heavenly presence of God through his prayers.<sup>2</sup>*

### Did you know?

St. Nicholas of Tolentino (1246-1305), is the patron saint of Holy Souls (the souls in Purgatory). Several other saints have had visions of Purgatory, or have had visitations from the souls there, such as St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Faustina, St. Padre Pio, and many more.

<sup>1</sup> Amorth, G. (1999). *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, Ignatius Press: San Francisco, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkham, J. (2014). *The Holy Souls*. Retrieved from <http://www.mysticsofthechurch.com/2014/02/the-holy-souls-of-purgatory.html>