



# The Hallowtide Triduum

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a *triduum*?

A triduum is a three-day period of prayer and special religious observances, usually in preparation for or in celebration of an important feast. You are probably familiar with the Paschal Triduum, which refers to the three days from Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday, but did you know that Halloween (or "All Hallows' Eve") marks the beginning of another triduum? It is called the *Hallowtide Triduum*. It begins by venerating and celebrating the saints in heaven on All Hallows' Eve and All Saints Day, preparing us for the culminating focus of this triduum, which is All Souls' Day – a day of prayer for the suffering souls in Purgatory. This sets the focus for the entire month of November, which is called the Month of Holy Souls.

### Who are the “Holy Souls”?

In Catholic terms, the words *holy souls* refer to the souls in Purgatory. These are souls who have died in a state of God's grace and friendship. They are guaranteed eternal salvation in Heaven, and are therefore "holy", but because they are imperfect they need to undergo a period of purification before they are adequately prepared to enter the bliss of Heaven.

### Why do we light candles?

Candles have been used in Christian worship since the beginning, and for many reasons. First and foremost, they remind us of Jesus, who said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). Jesus also said that we, the faithful, are "the light of the world", and that our light must shine before others, so that others will see the good that we do and will praise our Father in Heaven (Mt. 5: 14-16). The candle, as it flickers and sways, also reminds us of life, and its delicate beauty. Its upward orientation and the curls of smoke that ascend from its tip signify our prayers, which rise up to Heaven. Lighting a candle, therefore, is a way of extending our prayer and showing solidarity with the soul for whom the prayer is offered. For these reasons, Christians all over the world and throughout history have been placing candles on family graves. It is especially appropriate to do this during the Hallowtide Triduum and throughout the Month of Holy Souls. The Catholic Church even offers an indulgence on behalf of a soul in Purgatory for anyone who visits a cemetery during the first eight days of the month of November to pray for the deceased.

### Did you know?

St. Joseph of Arimathea gave up his own tomb for Christ. He is the patron saint of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Together with St. Nicodemus (who is the patron saint of undertakers), he interred the body of Jesus. <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Saint Joseph of Arimathea". *CatholicSaints.Info*. 22 February 2017. Web. <<http://catholicsaints.info/saint-joseph-of-arimathea/>>