

All Saints Vigil

All Saints' Day

(The vigil of this feast is popularly called "Hallowe'en" or "Halloween".)

Solemnity celebrated on the first of November. It is instituted to honour all the saints, known and unknown, and, according to Urban IV, to supply any deficiencies in the faithful's celebration of saints' feasts during the year.

In the early days the Christians were accustomed to solemnize the anniversary of a martyr's death for Christ at the place of martyrdom. In the fourth century, neighbouring dioceses began to interchange feasts, to transfer relics, to divide them, and to join in a common feast; as is shown by the invitation of St. Basil of Caesarea (397) to the bishops of the province of Pontus. Frequently groups of martyrs suffered on the same day, which naturally led to a joint commemoration. In the persecution of Diocletian the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all. The first trace of this we find in Antioch on the Sunday after Pentecost. We also find mention of a common day in a sermon of St. Ephrem the Syrian (373), and in the 74th homily of St. John Chrysostom (407). At first only martyrs and St. John the Baptist were honoured by a special day. Other saints were added gradually, and increased in number when a regular process of canonization was established; still, as early as 411 there is in the Chaldean Calendar a "Commemoratio Confessorum" for the Friday after Easter. In the West Boniface IV, 13 May, 609, or 610, consecrated the Pantheon in Rome to the Blessed Virgin and all the martyrs, ordering an anniversary. Gregory III (731-741) consecrated a chapel in the Basilica of St. Peter to all the saints and fixed the anniversary for 1 November. A basilica of the Apostles already existed in Rome, and its dedication was annually remembered on 1 May. Gregory IV (827-844) extended the celebration on 1 November to the entire Church. The vigil seems to have been held as early as the feast itself. The octave was added by Sixtus IV (1471-84).

Eve of a Feast

(Or VIGIL; Lat. *Vigilia*; Gr. *pannychis*).

In the first ages, during the night before every feast, a vigil was kept. In the evening the faithful assembled in the place or church where the feast was to be celebrated and prepared themselves by prayers, readings from Holy Writ (now the Offices of Vespers and Matins), and sometimes also by hearing a sermon. On such occasions, as on fast days in general, Mass also was celebrated in the evening, before the Vespers of the following day. Towards morning the people dispersed to the streets and houses near the church, to wait for the solemn services of the forenoon. This vigil was a regular institution of Christian life and

was defended and highly recommended by St. Augustine and St. Jerome (see Pleithner, "Aeltere Geschichte des Breviergebetes", pp. 223 sq.). The morning intermission gave rise to grave abuses; the people caroused and danced in the streets and halls around the church (Durandus, "Rat. Div. off.", VI, 7). St. Jerome speaks of these improprieties (Epist. ad Ripuarium).

As the feasts multiplied, the number of vigils was greatly reduced. But the abuses could be stopped only by abolishing the vigils. And where they could not be abrogated at once and entirely they were to begin in the afternoon. A synod held at Rouen in 1231 prohibited all vigils except those before the patronal feast of a church (Hefele, "Conciliengeschichte", V, 1007). In place of nocturnal observances, the bishops introduced for the laity a fast on the day before the feast, which fast Durandus (loc. cit.) calls "jejunium dispensationis". Honorius of Auxerre, in 1152 (Gemma Animae, III, 6), and others explain in this way the origin of this fast. It existed, however, long before the abolition of the nocturnal meetings. The fast on Christmas Eve is mentioned by Theophilus of Alexandria (d. 412), that before the Epiphany by St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), that before Pentecost by the Sacramentary of St. Leo I. Pope Nicholas I (d. 867), in his answer to the Bulgarians, speaks of the fast on the eves of Christmas and of the Assumption. The Synod of Erfurt (932) connects a fast with every vigil. The very fact that the people were not permitted to eat or drink before the services of the vigil (Vespers and Matins) were ended, after midnight, explains the excesses of which the councils and writers speak.

The Synod of Seligenstadt (1022) mentions vigils on the eves of Christmas, Epiphany, the feast of the Apostles, the Assumption of Mary, St. Laurence, and All Saints, besides the fast of two weeks before the Nativity of St. John. After the eleventh century the fast, Office, and Mass of the nocturnal vigil were transferred to the day before the feast; and even now the liturgy of the Holy Saturday (vigil of Easter) shows, in all its parts, that originally it was not kept on the morning of Saturday, but during Easter Night. The day before the feast was henceforth called vigil. A similar celebration before the high feast exists also in the Orthodox (Greek) Church, and is called *pannychis* or *hagrypnia*. In the Occident only the older feasts have vigils; even the feasts of the first class introduced after the thirteenth century (Corpus Christi, the Sacred Heart) have no vigils, except the Immaculate Conception, which Pope Leo XIII (30 Nov., 1879) singled out for this distinction. The number of vigils in the Roman Calendar besides Holy Saturday is seventeen, viz., the eves of Christmas, the Epiphany, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, the eight feasts of the Apostles, St. John the Baptist, St. Laurence, and All Saints. Some dioceses and religious orders have particular vigils, e.g. the Servites, on the Saturday next before the feast of the Seven Dolours of Our Lady; the Carmelites, on the eve of the feast of Mount Carmel. In the United States only four of these vigils are fast days: the vigils of Christmas, Pentecost, the Assumption, and All Saints.

The vigils of Christmas, the Epiphany, and Pentecost are called *vigiliae majores*; they have a proper Office (semi-double), and the vigil of Christmas, from Lauds on, is kept as a double feast. The rest are *vigiliae minores*, or *communes*, and have the ferial office. On the occasion of the reform of the Breviary, in 1568, a homily on the Gospel of the vigil was added, an innovation not accepted by the Cistercians. If a vigil falls on a Sunday, according to the present rubrics, it is kept on the preceding Saturday; during the Middle Ages in many churches it was joined to the Sunday Office. If it occurs on a double or a semi-double feast, it is limited to a commemoration in the Lauds and Mass (a feast of the first class excludes this commemoration), the ninth lesson in the Breviary, and the last Gospel in Mass. If it occurs on a day within an ordinary octave, the Mass is said of the vigil, the Office of the octave; if it occurs on a *feria major*, the vigil is omitted in the Breviary and commemorated only in the Mass, if the *feria* has a proper mass; if not (e.g. in Advent), the mass is said of the vigil, the *feria* is commemorated. In the Ambrosian Liturgy of Milan only the vigils of Christmas and Pentecost are kept, at least by a special Mass; the other vigils exist only in the Calendar, but are not kept in the liturgy. In the Mozarabic Rite only Christmas has a vigil; three days before Epiphany and four days before Pentecost a fast is observed; the other vigils are unknown.