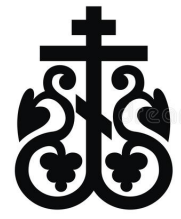


Light of the East



All Souls Saturdays

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Roswell, Georgia



One of the most venerable traditions in the Eastern Church is the commemoration of the departed in our liturgical prayers. It is the constant teaching of the Church since Apostolic times that the departed can be helped by our prayers, offerings and good deeds. St. John Chrysostom (+407) in speaking of the faithful departed reminded his people: “Let us assist them according to our power. Let us think of some advantage for them, small though it be, but let us assist them. How and in what way? By praying for them, by asking others to pray for them, and by constantly giving alms to the poor in their behalf!” (*Homily on Philippians 3, 4*)

The custom of offering prayers and sacrifices for the departed comes to us from the Old Testament in the II Book of Maccabees 12:45: “It is therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins.” In the Catholic Church, commemoration of the dead is considered as one of the main works of mercy.

All the early Liturgies of the Church contain a prayer for the departed. St. John Chrysostom wrote “Not in vain did the Apostles order that remembrance should be made of the dead in the awesome Mysteries. They knew that great gain resulted to the deceased, and great benefit. For when the whole assembly of the people stands with uplifted hands and that awesome Sacrifice lies displayed, how shall we not prevail with God by our entreaty for them? And this we do for those who have departed in faith!” (*Homily Philippians 3, 4*).

In the Byzantine Rite, we commemorate the deceased every day at the Divine Liturgy immediately after the Consecration with the petition: “Remember as well all those who have fallen asleep before us in the hope of resurrection to eternal life”

The Byzantine Church has since the ninth century established special days of prayer for the departed

On Saturday, February 11, 2023, the first All Souls Saturday of this liturgical year, the Divine Liturgy for the Departed will be celebrated at 10:00 AM for the names of the deceased that have been submitted.

During the *Panachida* all the names of our faithful departed are read aloud and prayed for. Be sure to submit the names of those deceased members of your family whom you wish to be remembered by **Feb. 8**. By our presence, our personal prayers, almsgiving and receiving Holy Communion at this Liturgy we strengthen the bond of love with our departed loved ones and indeed keep their memory everlasting!

known as All Souls Saturday. The Sabbath day (Saturday) was chosen since in Hebrew “Sabbath” means “rest”. Thus we make a remembrance of the deceased on that “day of rest” for they are “resting” from all their earthly cares.” When commemorating our departed, we constantly implore God to give them eternal rest since, according to the Scriptures, to enter into God’s rest means to join Him in an eternal life of happiness. (Heb. 4:3-11; Rev. 14:13) In our liturgical year there are five All Souls Saturdays namely, Meat Fare Saturday, the Second, Third and Fourth Saturdays of the Great Lent, and the Saturday before Pentecost.

Meat-Fare Saturday is a special day of prayer since on Meat-Fare Sunday we liturgically commemorate the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46). Therefore, on the previous day, we, in our charity, intercede with the merciful Judge for the deceased that they be placed at His right hand when He will come to judge the living and the dead.

From the beginning of Christianity, local churches kept registers, known as diptychs, of those who departed this life. The custom was to announce the names of the deceased during the liturgical services. This venerable custom was transmitted to us by our ancestors as a part of our beautiful spiritual heritage. Every year, just before Meat-Fare Saturday, the families give the lists of their departed loved ones to the pastor with the request that they be mentioned at the services held for the deceased on the *All Souls Saturday*. St. John Chrysostom assures us that: “It is a great honor to be worthy of mention, while the celebration of the Holy Mysteries is going on.” (*Homily on the Acts* 21, 4) Members of the family are encouraged to attend these services on the All Souls Saturdays for by their presence and by their personal prayers and receiving Holy Communion they strengthen the bond of love with their departed loved ones and indeed keep their memory everlasting!

In the burial service according to the Byzantine Rite, the Church places the following words on the lips of the deceased, as we sing the hymns prescribed in bidding our departed loved one our final farewell:

Come all you that love me and bid me farewell, for I shall no longer walk with you nor talk with you, since I am going to my Judge, Who shows no favors and rewards or punishes everyone according to his deeds. Therefore, I beg and implore all of you, pray for me continually to Christ our God that, on account of my sins, I may not be doomed into the place of affliction, but rather be granted a place where the light of life is shining!



Memory Eternal for us all, until the battle is done and everything has found its rest.

It is therefore of great consolation for us, the surviving friends and relatives of our faithful departed, to be able to help them and thus remain united to them by a bond of everlasting love. “May their memory be eternal.”

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