THE *Episcopal* CHURCH

October 30, 2011 – Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

All Saints' Day and the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed

The Episcopal Church celebrates All Saints' Day each year on November 1, and celebrates the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed (sometimes called All Souls' Day) on November 2.

All Saints' Day, which commemorates the saints of the church, known and unknown, is one of the seven principal feasts of the church year, and is one of the four feast days recommended for Holy Baptism.

Although scholars disagree as to the exact origins of All Saints' Day, the first recorded celebration of the festival of All Saints was in 610 when Pope Boniface IV consecrated the Pantheon in Rome to the Blessed Virgin and all the martyrs. However, some believe the celebration of All Saints began as the ancient pagan Feast of the Lemures, celebrated on May 13, to appease malevolent and restless spirits of the dead. During the eighth century, Pope Gregory III suppressed the feast of May 13, and moved the day of remembrance to November 1.

Fra Angelico's "The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs" (circa 1424)

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In the tenth century, November 2, All Souls' Day, became a holy day as well. All Souls' Day served as a day for families and friends to remember their departed loved ones. After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, this day was no longer observed, but in recent years it has become an optional day of observance on the Episcopal calendar.

Increasingly, many congregations within the Episcopal Church, especially Latino/Hispanic, celebrate the Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) on November 2 (All Souls' Day). This Mexican tradition, which can be traced back to an ancient Aztec festival, brings families and friends together to remember and pray for their loved ones who have died. Altars are often built in people's homes to honor the deceased, decorated with sugar skulls, candles, marigolds, and photographs, along with the departed's favorite foods and beverages. There is a real sense that the deceased and their loved ones commune with each other on this day.

Sugar skulls for *Dios de los Muertos*, cc by Jennifer Janviere

Collect for All Saints' Day

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen (Book of Common Prayer, p. 245).