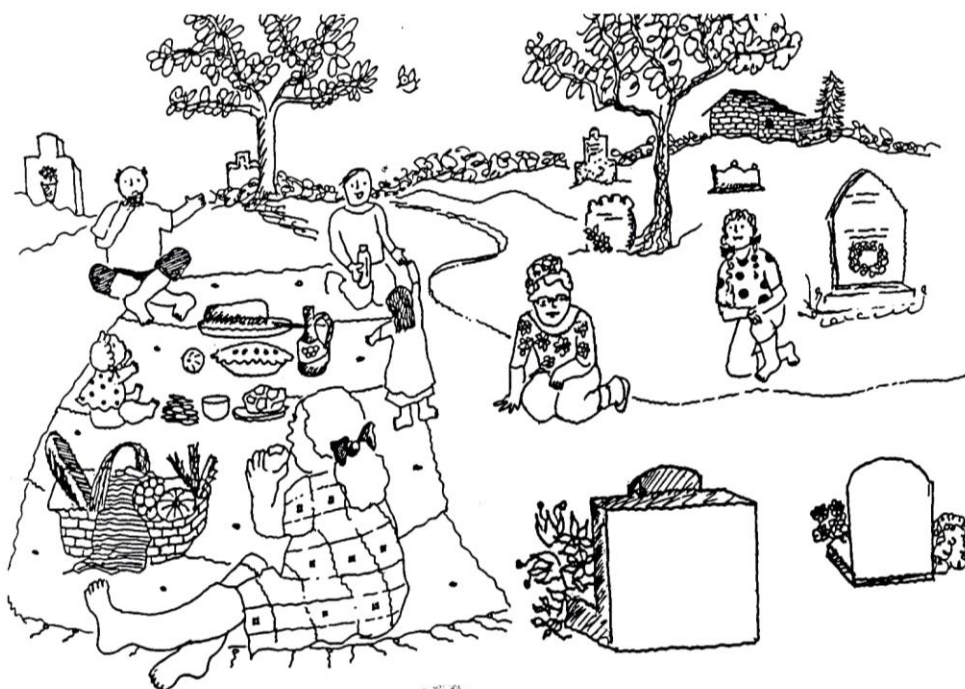




Trick or Treat?

Every holiday is a day for open doors! Hospitality this is called. Friends and strangers (new friends) are welcome. We never know who will enter. It might be Christ!

But on Halloween, some of those strangers announce themselves: "Trick or treat!" And yet we open the doors! Not only that, we hand out good things. We act like our doors are open to the whole world and we have nothing at all to fear! We act like all that we have we'll share with the whole world!

And all those costumes and masks! What's going on? This dull, everyday world puts aside all its seriousness for a few hours. We put on a mask and become someone else. We play with the world. We truly make fun of the world. We turn it upside down as Jesus did with the beatitudes. The reign of God is a little like this.

All Saints, All Souls: Taste the Fullness of Time

God's harvest is on! God will "harvest" all creation, us too. To celebrate the saints, fill your home with signs of the harvest. Bob for apples. Hang the beautiful ears of hard corn. Do your part to be "bringing in the sheaves."

What are the foods of these days, the harvest in your corner of the country? Put foods into other foods. Have stuffed eggplant, stuffed peppers, stuffed grape leaves. Make small pumpkins filled with chili. Or invite guests for hot caramel corn and pumpkin pie. And apples! Apple cider, apples plain, apple crisp, apple fondue!

Our ancestors saw these autumn days as the battle of summer and winter, and winter wins! (But there will be a rematch next Easter.) This battle felt like a "crack in time," a chance to see the past and present and future all at once. Some of the games of these days are a peek into the future—a bright new apple's carefully peeled skin tossed over the shoulder. What letter does it form and what might that letter signify?

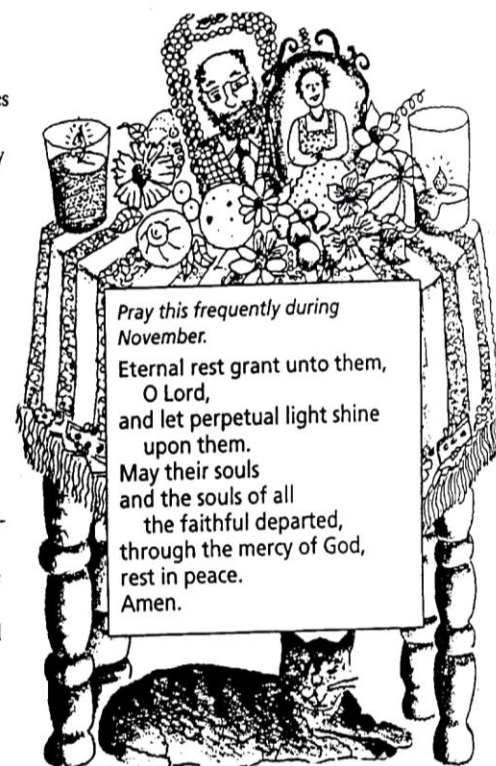
All Saints and All Souls, All November

During November, bring out photos and other mementos of the dead. Light candles and tell stories of those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Ask others, especially the elderly, to tell the stories they remember. Go seek the stories of those who seldom have anyone to visit with them. Discover a friend for the winter ahead.

And how will you and your family think about death? Write down some things about your own funeral and burial. What do you want to be important to those who gather to remember and to commend you to the Lord? What scriptures would you want them to read at your wake and funeral? What will they sing beside your grave?

Visit a cemetery. Have a picnic there. Tidy the tombstones before winter sets in. Make the graveyard bright with candles and chrysanthemums. Remember, we'll all be making our beds here one day. Take time to learn about the Day of the Dead, about *Día de los Muertos*, as it is observed in Spanish-speaking communities.

Take an autumn walk and let the earth in November do the talking.



Pray this frequently during November.

Eternal rest grant unto them,
O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine
upon them.
May their souls
and the souls of all
the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.
Amen.

Before the evening meal in November, sing a verse of this hymn and join in the prayer that follows. If you don't know the tune, use the melody of "Amazing Grace."

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of your throne
Your saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is your arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

A thousand ages in your sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

— Isaac Watts, 1748

Father, welcome into your kingdom
our departed brothers and sisters,
and all who have left this world
in your friendship.
There we hope to share your glory
when every tear will be wiped away.
On that day we shall see you, our God,
as you are.
We shall become like you
and praise you for ever,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

