

CONCERNING THE SAINTS AND THOSE DEPARTED IN CHRIST.

FROM the earliest period of the Christian Church, those saints and martyrs who had served God both by their lives and deaths, confessing His Son Jesus Christ to be Very God of Very God and the Saviour of the World, were commemorated with regard and respect, with devotion and with love. All that belonged to them was had in remembrance. Every act, word, and example was duly considered. St. Chrysostom tells us as much, pointing out their deserts, their merits, and their virtues; and when no special day was appropriated to known and venerated saints, there grew up a custom to observe all the unremembered saints at the beginning of November. In the year 610, Pope Boniface the Fourth, the son of a physician in Valeria, consecrated the Pantheon at Rome to the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints on the 1st of November in the above year—from which great and important event the observance of this glorious and popular festival dated. Those dioceses and countries into which the custom had not yet spread began to note the feast in the ninth century, when Pope Gregory the Fourth (son of a Roman patrician) issued a solemn decree that All Saints' Day should be everywhere observed. The Greek Church, as possibly was the case with most of the Oriental Churches, kept a similar festival, with the same purpose and intent, on the Sunday after Whitsun-Day. In the old Church of England, All Saints' Day was a most popular and deeply-loved festival, as was also that which immediately followed it—All Souls' Day, a feast in honour of which a college at Oxford and very many churches are dedicated. Thomas Hearne, the antiquary, points out, that, almost into the middle of the eighteenth century, the remembrance of departed friends was observed both with religious and social rites—and charitable bequests for the poor, left years ago, are still distributed in many of our beautiful parish churches on the day succeeding All Saints' Feast.

We should bear in mind that there is a clear distinction between the Saints of God—those whose virtues, graces, and triumphs have been marked and notorious throughout the whole family of Christ—and the faithful departed—the Souls of the righteous in the hands of God:—

The Saints are those so super-eminent for sanctity, that their death-day is observed as an annual triumph by the Church Militant, and their names enshrined in the Church's Sacred Kalendars. We know that they are with God in Heaven, though we know, too (for the Apostle declares as much), that their joy is not yet as complete as it will be, when the number of the elect is accomplished, and all the ransomed are gathered round the footstool of God.

The Souls are those of ordinary Christians, friends loved and lost, who, having served God faithfully, are not yet admitted into the ranks of the