



Awaken your Irish Spirit

REMEMBERING OUR IRISH ANCESTORS THIS NOVEMBER
IRELAND REACHING OUT WEBSITE -info@irelandxo.com

Samhain, the 3-day Celtic Feast of the Dead, was celebrated in Ireland up until the 14th century when Rome decreed November 1st and 2nd as "holy days of obligation". With that, Ireland's ancient feast of the dead was reimagined as the souls in Purgatory* being released to roam the world asking prayers of friends (from midnight October 31 until midnight November 2).

- October 31 – **All Hallow's Eve** – was installed on the Church calendar as a vigil of preparation for the 2-day religious observance when masses would be said for the departed who had not yet been admitted to heaven.
- November 1st – **All Hallow's** aka **All Saints Day** – between noon on the All Saints' Day and noon on "All Souls' Day" Catholics made nine visits to the Church to offer prayers for the suffering souls in Purgatory. Schoolchildren were encouraged to visit all the local graveyards and pray for the souls of the dearly departed.
- November 2 – **All Soul's Day** –the Irish traditionally believed that the souls of the dead would return to their family and speak to their descendants.

**Purgatory – an intermediary place of suffering and purification for souls awaiting admission to heaven.*

READ MORE [Halloween Traditions Across Ireland](#)

So Halloween was celebrated as the eve of All Saints' day... and November 1st (the eve of All Souls' day) had its own unique set of superstitions and observances, many of which had pre-Christian origins...

SUPERSTITIONS

According to [All Soul's Day Folklore on Duchas.ie](#) the following beliefs were particular to "All Souls Night" (November 1st)

- Ghosts were said to be seen in all lonely places, especially graveyards, and people would dread being out late on this night.
- You are supposed to stay home and not go out after dark (lest you tread upon the poor souls or find them walking with you).
- It is usual for all the family to go to bed early that night so as to leave the house ready for the Dead. The door had to be left unlocked and the fire was not to be raked.
- A shooting star on All Souls night is a sign that a soul is going to heaven.
- It is also unlucky to throw water out on "All Souls' Day" as you would be throwing it into the Soul's faces.
- The old people say that if you look in the ashes in the morning and see a track of a heel there will someone dead before the next souls' night..if there is a track of toes that is a sin/gn there will be some extra person in the house before next All Souls night.
- If you give money to a poor man at the door on All Souls Day you'll have great luck for the year.
- WEXFORD: anything you throw out on "All Souls Night" will be thrown back into your face.
- LONGFORD: twelve neighbours would gather in a house in the [townland](#) and bring with them a candle each. Then they would get a shovel of manure and set the twelve candles in it and light them. Then they would say the rosary and whichever of the candles was burned out first the person that it belonged to was supposed to be dead before the year was out.

READ MORE [What is a townland?](#)

- MONAGHAN: It is unlucky to go out after midnight on All Souls night for the devil is about and he throws is stone or ball or something and sometimes the people faint.
- CORK: Long ago on this Night the people in the country used to bring in a cock and put him on a perch over the door. If the cock crowed before the clock struck 3 (am) it was a sign that something awful was to happen, and if he didn't crow, they would thank the Lord.
- MEATH: a special cross (made of wood and round the wood are straws) is made to keep away evil that night. It is to be put up for eleven years over the door then it has to be taken down and a new one has to be put up instead. Little black crosses are made out of wood and one is hung in each room beside a picture of the Sacred Heart.
- CORK: the bushes gathered on St Brigid's day (to make St Brigid's Crosses) were kept until All Souls Day and were blessed.

PREPARATIONS

A warm welcome for the souls (to find warmth and comfort in their old homes) was of utmost importance.

(In many ways, the preparations for All Soul's Night long ago, seem familiar to preparing for Santa Claus today.)

- **CANDLES:** A candle was lit for each departed one (to give it light on its journey for that night). The candles were to burn themselves out to the last and cannot be used for any other purpose. Candles were arranged around the fire or in a cross formation or in the window. (The windows of town streets presented a lovely appearance on this night).
- **DOORS & WINDOWS:** the door was to be left unlocked so that the souls could enter (In the cities, they left a window open instead). Curtains/blinds were not to be drawn.
- **WATER:** it was traditional to leave cups of water on the table and/or a basin of water for the parched souls to drink from/ cool their hands / wash their feet.
- **FOOD OFFERINGS:** in every house food was left out (on the table/ dresser/ window) that was not to be touched/eaten the next day. In some houses, this was Irish soda bread, but in most, it was a plate of [Colcannon](#)** (or "Poundies" in Donegal).
- **THE FIREPLACE:** a good washing been given to the hearth, and a big fire was put down before going to bed (with big saucers of colcannon around it. The fire was not to be "raked" that night (*covering lit sods with hot ashes, where it remains kindled until morning*). A row of chairs or stools were put around the fire and a pipe and tobacco were left beside the fire.
- About mid-night the head of the house gets up again and waves a white cloth after the souls, bidding them farewell, and asking them to come back again next year.

**"[Colcannon](#)" is made of mashed potatoes, cabbage, (sometimes parsnips), onions, butter, pepper and salt.