

Memorial Service



Death alters but does not destroy the bond of love and faith which exists among all the members of the Church. Orthodoxy believes that through our prayers, those "who have fallen asleep in the faith and the hope of the Resurrection" continue to have opportunity to grow closer to God. Therefore, the Church prays constantly for her members who have died in Christ. We place our trust in the love of God and the power of mutual love and forgiveness. We pray that God will forgive the sins of the faithful departed, and that He will receive them into the company of Saints in the heavenly Kingdom.

The Orthodox Church remembers the departed in the prayers of every Divine Liturgy. Besides this, there is a Memorial Service in which the Church also remembers the dead. According to tradition, the Memorial Service is offered on the third, ninth, and fortieth day after a death, as well as on the yearly anniversary of the death. In addition to these times, the Memorial Service is always offered for all the faithful departed on four "Saturdays of the souls." These are: the two Saturdays preceding Great Lent; the first Saturday of Great Lent; and, the Saturday before Pentecost. In the United States the Service is also offered on Memorial Day. When the Memorial Service is offered, it is customary for the family of the deceased to bring a dish of boiled wheat to the Church. The boiled wheat is placed on a table in the center of the nave during the Service. The wheat, known as kollyva, is a symbol of the Resurrection. When speaking of the Resurrection, our Lord said: "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)