

# November – It's Not Just for Eating Turkey!

By Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan

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The month of November is usually associated with Thanksgiving Day in the United States and for most it means a meal with turkey. It is always good for us to be thankful to God for the many blessings he gives us. And it is always an appropriate holiday to spend with family. I will be with my two brothers, John and Joe, and their families in Kansas City. Happy Thanksgiving to all!

But I want to bring attention to two other days that are of importance to Catholics in the month of November. These are All Saints Day which is a Holy Day of Obligation and the Feast of Christ the King.

All Saints Day is a solemnity which honors the Saints of the Church and is always celebrated on November 1. In the early days the Christians were accustomed to solemnize the anniversary of a martyr's death for Christ at the place of their martyrdom. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century dioceses began to interchange feasts and to join in a common feasts. Frequently groups of martyrs suffered on the same day, which led to a joint commemoration. In the persecution of Diocletian the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be designated for each martyr. The Church felt that every martyr should be venerated so it appointed a common day for all. It was Pope Gregory III who consecrated a chapel in the Basilica of St. Peter to all the saints and fixed the anniversary for November 1. Then Pope Gregory IV extended the celebration to the entire Church. We need to be thankful to God for all the Saints who serve as role models for us to emulate so that we can reach Heaven to spend eternity with God.

The Feast of Christ the King celebrates the complete authority of Christ as King and Lord of the universe. Christ the King Sunday used to be celebrated on the last Sunday of October, but since the 1969 calendar reforms, the Feast now falls on the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, which is the Sunday before Advent. This year is it Sunday, November 20. It is fitting that the Feast is observed right before Advent, when we liturgically wait for the promised Messiah (King). Jesus knew the domineering nature of secular kings, and in contrast, he connected his role as King to humble service and commanded his followers (us) to be servants as well. While Christ is coming to judge the nations, his teachings spell out a kingdom of justice and judgment balanced with love, mercy, peace, and forgiveness. When we celebrate Christ as King, we are not celebrating an oppressive ruler, but one willing to die for us. We must never forget that Christ redefined and changed the concept of kingship. Surely we must give thanks to God for his greatest gift to humanity, Our Lord and Savior – Christ the King!