



## Lemuria

Lemuria was a feast in ancient Roman religion during which rites were performed to exorcise the malevolent and fearful ghosts of the dead from homes. The unwholesome specters of the restless dead, the “lemurs” were propitiated with offerings of black beans and salted flower cakes. The Lemuria occurred over three days: May 9, 11, and 13.

In 607 CE Roman emperor Phocas defeated the barbarians in control of Rome. On The Palatine hill stood the Parthenon and the temple of Cybele, the Magna Mater or Great Mother. On May 13th, 610 CE the temple was given to Pope Boniface IV who re-consecrated it to the Virgin Mary, the great Christian mother, and all the martyrs. All Saints day was instituted and celebrated on May 13th. So, for over two centuries the temple, now a Christian shrine, was used to celebrate and pray for the dead in Christ. In 834 CE the church presided over by Pope Gregory III, changed the date of All Saints Day to November 1st. Not coincidentally this date fell on the Celtic Holiday of Samhain (pronounced: sow'-en). All Saints was then called “All Hallow”, meaning All Holy and the evening before November 1st, all hallows-eve was October 31st, Halloween.

Why did the church change the date to November 1st? It was a general practice of the restored Roman Empire, now professing Christianity, to “convert” the pagans within the empire as quickly and on as large a scale as possible. Changing dates of festivals to coincide with the existing celebrations of the people often made it easier to accomplish the assimilation. The civil and religious leaders saw how important it was, for the sake of unity, to allow only one religion. So it became expedient to let the recently converted pagans keep their heathen festivals, to which they clung fervently and observed openly, such as Samhain, and to co-opt the celebration, re-label it and incorporate it within the Christianized calendar. The recognition and remembrance of the dead being a common theme, the metamorphosis was mutually satisfying and stuck.