

Autumn: Harvest Festival, Angel Festivals, Remembrance Days

Source: www.jahresfeste.ch

Beginning of Autumn

23. September

Harvest Festival

Switzerland: Usually on the third Sunday of September = **Day of Thanksgiving, Repentance and Prayer**

Germany: 1st Sunday of October, in other counties on different dates between Michaelmas (29. September) and at the latest end of November (for example Thanksgiving in the USA)

Autumn and Harvest Festivals

23. September – beginning of Autumn = beginning of the relaxation after work and reflection of its achievements, of the year

In Switzerland, since 1832 Day of Thanksgiving, Repentance and Prayer on the third Sunday in September, in Germany often on the first Sunday after Michaelmas, in other countries different dates between Michaelmas (29. September) and end of November at the latest (e.g. Thanksgiving in the USA).

Nature: Migration of the birds South, change in colours of leaves, the material is drawn back to earth, spiritual escapes into spiritual realms.

Leitmotiv Autumn: Passage and threshold from the external word to the internal one; physically and spiritually withdrawing into the earth, the house, oneself, the spiritual, the heavenly.

Leitmotiv Harvest Festival: Be amazed about, be grateful for, hold in high esteem and celebrate the harvest and other blessings of life such as peace, good relationships, prosperity, health, abode, warmth, education. Harvest Festival also in the metaphorical sense, end / harvest of the efforts of the year / day / project = retrospection, judgement, internalisation (Did something develop? How much was the fruit able to mature? What can I change for the better and how?) → compost the 'rotten'.

Additional Themes:

Hunger in the world: Each year roughly 30 millions of people die of starvation, roughly 80'000 per day. 800 million suffer from malnutrition, even though the worldwide production of food exceeds the total needs by 10% → just distribution of goods, flow of capital (poor get poorer, the rich get richer), sharing and passing on on a small scale:

Preservation of the creation/ protection of the environment: Where does our food come from (and how is it produced), where do our utensils come from (and how are they disposed of?) → exploitation and pollution of our soil, woods and oceans through waste, poison, hormones, ect. What can we ourselves do to work against this?

Symbols: ears of corn / bread (cf. Christ describes himself as the bread of life) and grapes / wine (sweetness, abundance, joy, blood, force of life that carries us through winter / death, cf. Christ who describes himself as the true vine upon which he carries believers like branches)

Customs:

Harvest Festivals are celebrated in almost all cultures and religions since the dawn of time, for without harvest there is no life. Early rituals: Sacrifices for the gods / goddesses and joyful celebrations on a profane level.

For that reason the Harvest Festival is particularly well suited to inter-religious celebrations. In the case of the Abrahamic religions the **blessing of Aaron** lends itself well to the purpose, since it is applied equally to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions:

"May the Lord bless you and guard you, May the Lord make His face (in Islam: light) shed light upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up His face (in Islam: light) unto you and give you peace."

Origin of the 3300 year old blessing:

Aaron was the brother of Moses, the first high priest of Israel and thus the precursor of the Levitic priesthood. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel saying unto them..." (4. Moses 6,22-24f). This priestly blessing was preserved in Judaism over thousands of years. In the Christian tradition it is spoken at the end of the evangelical and catholic services. In Islam this solemn blessing is used in the private sphere, e.g. when someone is about to travel or before something burdensome like an exam, and operation. The word face is replaced by 'light' (of God) in Islam, otherwise the wording is identical.

In Judaism: in terms of timing and content corresponds to the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles / Sukkot. It is a joyful, seven-day Thanksgiving in memory of God providing for his people during the 40-day Exodus. Some Jews build protective huts from branches and large leaves during Sukkot. Meals are eaten and, if the weather is warm enough children sleep in these huts.

In the time of the OT it was a custom to leave sheaves behind for the poor.

In Christianity: During the Middle Ages there were votive services and donations of the blessing of the weather*. Earlier, the first carriage of the harvest was led home in silence, the last sheaf was the so called 'Betgarbe'**, which was occasionally made into a Corn Mother. Reminiscent of Mother Earth (Egypt = fertility goddess Isis, Greek = fertility goddess Demeter, Romans = fertility goddess Ceres; in the Christian tradition Christ takes on that role).

*blessing of protection from bad weather and natural disasters

**sheaf of prayer

Nowadays altars in churches, festival grounds, floats or market stalls are richly decorated with fruit, vegetables, sheaves, flowers ect. Depending on the occasion singing together, prayer, thanks, processions full of joy and dancing take place, the last often in local traditional dress. There are special markets, 'Schnittersonntage' or other occasions, for example the 'Sichlete' in Switzerland. Thanksgiving bread is baked, on which, in some regions, the sign of the cross is made before eating. There is fruit cake (on the Swiss Prayer Day often plum cake), stews and vegetable soup is cooked, potatoes in the fire, baked apples and other festive dishes. A healthy treat is elderberry-honey (3 table spoon of berry juice mixed with 500g of honey). In some regions the Harvest Festival is celebrated alongside the grape harvest, occasionally also on Michaelmas.

This season is associated with the preservation of food from garden and field: Dry, preserve, freeze, salt, smoke. This is particularly enjoyable together!

Vespertine Retrospection:

The daily small thanksgiving in the evening, the regular reflection about the experienced, as well as prayer, which prepares us for the nightly passage into a higher dimension are all connected to the Harvest Festival. The following sleep is like a small winter, during which a lot can rest and heal, so that the next morning can be begun with a new perspective. Cf. the saying 'sleep on it'.

Crafts: Collecting and decorating with nature material like rose hip, spindle tree, beechnuts, acorns, chestnut, ears of corn, ect.; craft necklaces, wreaths, nature puppets, dwarfs and other decorations from these.

Tie ears of corns into bouquets and possibly add flowers*, create corn netting and decorate it with colourful ribbons (decorate doors, tables, church benches with it), decorate Harvest Festival crowns made of corrugated cardboard with ears of corn, fill Harvest Festival baskets, make edible necklaces (put pumpkin seeds, dried fruit and nuts on a thread), put colourful prints on napkins and table cloths with halved fruit, create mosaics or mandalas with seeds, nuts, dried fruit, or fresh fruit, press colourful leaves between books or dip them into hot wax to preserve them, make autumn crown with colourful maple leaves (overlap two leaves, put a small stick through it to fix it, continue)

* Tie wreath: Buy straw ring or use crumpled up, oblong pieces of newspaper and tie it to a ring with wire. Arrange small bunches of ears of corn or other plant material like scaled and fix it to the ring with florist's wire.

All-year Harvest Festival Bowl: Write small notes about special experiences, as well as small highlights of everyday life (atmospheres of nature, touching encounters, good conversations, nice food, good movie...). Reread them from time to time to be able to relive these moments and be grateful.

Michaelmas

29. September: Festival in the honour of the archangel Michael, who fought against evil: See the primeval drama of the War in Heaven; humanity as fallen angel on the way back from the realm of the dead to God – under the protection of Michael and his army.

Michaelmas – 29. September

A festival in honour of Michael is known since the 5th century, since 1969 additionally also anniversary of all three archangels appearing in the bible recognised by the Western Church (Michael, Raphael, Gabriel). Nowadays it isn't celebrated very often, but is on the rise, similar to the Saint John's Eve-Midsummer festival. In substance it is thematically tied to central human question such as the 'creation of evil' and 'dealing with hostility towards life' (see section 'themes' below). In light of this, Michaelmas represents an indispensable opposite to Easter, where salvation from evil and the overcoming of the forces of death are in focus.

In Wales the late summer is supposedly called 'small late summer of Saint Michael'.

In Waldorf schools: several week long Michaelmas

The name Michael means 'Who is like God?'. This rhetorical question is addressed to the devil / Lucifer / Satan, who according to the bible a long time ago usurped a God-like position in heaven, i.e. still in purely spiritual dimensions (see War of the Heavens below).

Jewish Tradition: Michael is a particular protector of the people of Israel, cf. Daniel 10,13 and 12,1; Joshua 5,13; Isaiah 27,1 (dragon or winding snake, which will be stuck by the Lord with his sword).

Christianity: Michael chases Lucifer / the dragon alongside his apostate angels from heaven = War in Heaven (Revelation, 12,7-10) and **Creation of the Adversary Forces**. See "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Luke 10,18. Fallen angels see also 2. Peter 2,4 and Judas 1,6, as well as a metaphor in the OT Isaiah 14,12 and Ezekiel 28,12-19. We humans, as Fallen / spiritually dead, are in the service of Aeon (the devil) and were saved from the Fall by Christ (Ephesians 2,1-7).

Note on this: In the early Christianity Origen taught at the famous Christian school in Alexandria: **We humans are the fallen angels**, who are already on their way back to God, in contrast to the adversary forces, who at this moment are still working in the realm of Lucifer and try to hinder the ascension process of their fallen siblings / the humans. Thence the evil of this world originates, for we are imperfect beings on the cusp of ascension (cf. Jesus: "You are from beneath; I am from above." John 8,23), who strive on earth to reach the kingdom of heaven once more. According to Origen this great process of ascension cannot be halted, and the time shall come when even 'the last fiend' - Lucifer- shall return to god and Christ, so that all that is in heaven, that is to say in a spiritual dimension, shall be united. That will be the end of the material creation, whose only purpose was this reunion and which is indeed only transitory, as we know today: At some point the sun will be burnt out, even the universe ages.

During the Harrowing of Hell Michael fights by the side of Christ with his hosts against the adversary forces (see chapter Easter Saturday).

In the later Christian tradition Michael was viewed as the companion, who lead the dead to heaven, where he judges them at the weighing of the souls. In some regions he is additionally revered as a healer.

Michael is supposed to be the leader of the host of angels, and for that reason in art he is often depicted in

armour, with a sword, lance, shield, scales and occasionally a globe. Michael reinforces people in their services for good and supports them 'with the armour of God' in the fight against the adversary forces. "Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" Ephesians 6,11-18.

The apocryphal **Book of Enoch** (to this day part of the Abyssinian bible):

"An example of a fall of an angel can also be found in the pre-Christian 1. Book of Enoch, which was highly regarded in the early Christianity, but was not included in the canon of the bible. However, its importance is testified in that Enoch is mentioned both in the Old and the New Testament. [...] He is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews as an example of the power of faith: "Because of his faith Enoch was removed, so that he should not see the death, and he was not found anymore, because God had removed him; since before the removal he received the testimony, that he pleased God."

An old Jewish tradition is transmitted in his book, that says, that the main cause of evil is the Fall of the angels. It was most of all Lucifer's fault, the carrier of light and shining angel, because he wanted to lift his throne above God. In his exuberant arrogance he turned on God. For that reason he was thrown from heaven's high down in the devilish pits and became Prince of Hell and thus the principle of evil."

(from: Hans Ulrich Schäfer, "Bern – Stadt der Engel" translated by Aline Stotzer)

The **Essenes** (a Jewish movement at the time of Christ, similar to the Pharisees and the Sadducees) speak of the 'sons of light and darkness' and of the fight of the powers of light against the powers of darkness, which will end with the victory of good.

The **Cathars**, a harmless special association, which was brutally eradicated in the Middle Ages*, considers the Fall of the Angels to be the central event to the understanding of God's history of salvation with the humans. The Cathars taught, that we humans are in reality fallen angels, whose purpose it is to be reborn again and again, until we are able to cast off the material. At that point we, as Jesus before us, shall ascend to the angels in heaven. Additionally, Cathars preached a vegetarian life style and non violence. Men and women were considered equal.

*Catharsian Holocaust, cf. Citation by monk Arnold Amaury: "Roughly 20'000 were killed today, without consideration of age or sex."

Islam: The Quran mentions Michael, Surah 2,98, "Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and His messengers and Gabriel and Michael - then indeed, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers."

Michael, the Fight with the Dragon and the War in Heaven in Other Cultures/ Religions: Michael as an archetype shows up in many religions and myths with different names, and a division of spirits and gods at the beginning of time is an equally central theme. The ancient Iranian founder of a religion and prophet Zarathustra (630 BC) wrote: "It fell head first from heaven the most lying of the Devas, the Ur-corruptive Wicked Ghost (angra mainyu or Ahriman)". Cf. In the NT the devil is also called by Jesus as 'Father of Lies' (John 8,44), and Jesus "saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Luke 10,18. Zarathustra described Michael in his songs as Sraosha, which means 'obedience' or 'discipline'. He is the quarrelsome executer of divine directives and the angel of judgement, who awaits Zarathustra after his death. (Source: Prof. W. Hinz, "Zarathustra", Verlag Kohlhammer).

In the ancient Greek tradition the archetype of Michael appears to us in the guise of Chronos, who cast the unfaithful Gods from the Olympus down into the underworld. In the Babylonian myth Marduk defeats the great chaos dragon. In Greece Apollo defeats the Python-dragon and Zeus, after a fight Typhon, a fire breathing snake giant and buries him in the South of Italy (whenever he moves, volcanoes become active). In the ancient Indian Rigveda, written around 1250 BC, Michael is called Indra "Who fell the sky [...], who

killed the dragon, the irresistible in combat [...], who does not forgive the boisterous". He is described as a strong bull*, who cast Rauhina (the devil) into the abyss with his thunder wedge, when the latter tried to take haven. He does not only bombard the fighter (against evil), but also the feeble and the desolate, the beggar seeking for help (from 'ancient Indian Rigveda' summarised in 'Aus Michaels Wirken', Mellinger Verlag, Stuttgart, p. 36)

In the Hindu tradition, Shiva, the god of destruction, dances on the Demon of ignorance. However, he is also a healer, similar to Michael, who is in certain regions celebrated as a healer as well. Shiva's attribute is Linga, the many sword of force, his steed the bull*. Shiva's home is on the mountain Kailash. He has two sons, the god of war Karttikeya, and Ganesha, who embodies knowledge, wisdom, intelligence and strength. Shiva is depicted as ecstatic dancer or as meditating ascetic with a third eye. Even wife Durga / Shakti / Parvati (daughter of the mountain) fights as Kali (= the black) or Tschandi (= the cruel) against demons. She is depicted with weapons and skulls. However as Annapurna (= the merciful) she brings food. The festival of Shiva "Durga Pudscha" takes place in September / October in Bengali, during our Michaelmas.

* Parallels to the bull as attribute or substitute of Michael: In some European legends a bull fights against the dragon instead of Michael, this is also the case in artistic representation, for example the dragon fountain in front of the City hall in Copenhagen, Denmark. See also the vision of Ezekiel 1,4-10.

Plato speaks of a fall from a world of ideas into the material world.

In the Buddhist **Pali-Canon** we read about the myth of light spirits, that have lost their light power.

Modern myths that take up this Ur-motiv:

In his precursor to 'The Lord of the Rings' J. R. R. Tolkien describes the separation in ancient mythical times in the 'Silmarillion'.

Myth of Star Wars (movies): In the beginning Darth Vader is not a villain, but the strong and powerful figure Anakin Skywalker, who finally chooses the dark side (cf. Lucifer, who turned from a high and powerful angel into the devil and Prince of the Darkness).

Michael-Shrines: During the Christianisation the cult of Wotan/ Odin was often times replaced with a veneration of Michael. It was not seldom that in old places of worship destinations of pilgrimage sprung up. The first and oldest one of Europe exists since 490 AD, namely Monte Sant'Angelo, Gargano in Apulia Italy. The best known however is Mont Saint-Michel on the Atlantic coast in Normandy, France.

Symbols:

The sword stands for power, strength, deciding, judging. It is symbolic of the separation between good and evil, lie and truth, darkness and light, spiritually dead / fallen and spiritually living / divine. See "flaming sword which turned every way" of the Cherubim / guardian angels of paradise (Genesis, 3,24), but concerning us humans also Isaiah 2,4 (turns swords into ploughshare = don't inflict unnecessary violence!).

The Scales are used to weigh aspects before taking a decision = formation of judgement, justice, moral (29. September sign of the libra!).

In various creation myths **the dragon** it represents the anti-divine adversary forces, which create chaos. Depending on the context it can appear as a hybrid creature of snake (see OT snake leviathan Isaiah 27,1), lizard, bird, lion, crocodile (cf. OT Crocodile Leviathan, Job chapters 40 and 41; Crocodile Sobek or Apophi snake / dragon in the darkness in the ancient Egyptian tradition) and dog (see Greek hell hound Cerberus, who watches of the realm of the dead and in the Nordic-Germanic tradition the hell hound Garm, probably identical to Fenrir, a son of Loki and main enemy to the Gods, who is tied to the underworld). In Asian cultures, dragons are commonly regarded as heavenly and luck bringing beings, although there are lower dragons in those cultures as well, who do not play good roles. Lucifer (= carrier of light!) himself used to be a shining angel of light. See the word Seraphim, derived from the Hebrew 'saraph' / burn, which can also be used for snake or flying dragon. Seraphim are described as fiery, six-winged angels surrounding the throne of God.

Leitmotiv: Being able to distinguish in clear spirit, what serves evil and what has destructive consequences

and which must be limited or fought accordingly. Bravely face resistance, and use the 'sword' of justice and a knife-sharp intellect. The 'dragon' within or outside of us has to be conquered or temporarily imprisoned and bit by bit turned to good or healed. Therefore it is not a question of destroying evil or to displace it, but of recognising the hostile to life and facing it bravely, in order to be finally able to integrate it. As displaced shadow part it works from the hidden and thus can - unrecognised - not be fought and not be saved. See Harrowing of Hell (Chapter on Easter Saturday) = confrontation with the evil!

Themes: How was evil created? Good vs. evil as basic theme in almost all religions, fairy tales and myths. Through humans destructive tendencies are acted out as well. Corresponding examples of everyday life: stultify somebody, evil speech, lies, mobbing, fraud, blackmail, fights up to physical attacks and murder, as well as abuse of any kind. On the level of world politics it is exploitation, suppression, use of force and war-bound demonstrations of power, which create tremendous suffering. The force of and sometimes even fascination of evil are not to be underestimated. In the Lord's Prayer we explicitly ask to be saved from it and not be led into temptation.

In a concrete case we have to ask: WHAT is or seems 'evil'? (careful: it is easy to project the 'evil' on a supposed enemy instead of looking at oneself.) How can it be contained or overcome? Where and how is one forced / allowed to keep one's distance or even fight bravely when something hostile to life wants to take over? We have to make clear judgements and decisions. In order to be able to do that, we have to have a clear conscience, that is to say we should know what is right and wrong. Is it perhaps possible to solve a conflict in a 'peaceful fight', a fair altercation? → Put the focus on the constructive!

Theodicy-question: Why does God allow evil if he is good and all powerful? This is connected to the question of free will and the misuse of this freedom (the ability to not follow divine laws, experience separation and loss), as well as the resulting possibilities for evolution. Cf. Learning from one's errors. Suffering brings change. This holds for bodily harm as well, because when feeling pain do we know something is wrong and look for healing. Everybody has to free themselves from evil or ill out of their own free will, for nobody can be forced to their salvation / to good, see the parable of the lost son (Luke 15,11-32). You can open doors, build bridges (cf. Salvation through Christ for all of humanity!) - but each has to walk their own path.

Nature: Equinox has just passed, the light begins to wane, it becomes darker and darker outside. We can use internal or external light to counter this darkness, for example through the conscious focus on the good, beautiful, true or a Martin's light (lantern procession, see chapter on Saint Martin's Day) or later in December a Lucia light (see chapter on Lucy). Even in nature protective spines, thorns etc. are grown (cf. Michael's sword).

Customs: Michaelswecken / Harvest rolls (lightly sweetened yeast dough with raisins), oat pastries (strengthens bravery and vigour), surprises under the pillow (e.g. red bold stone), decorate candles with dragons (flame resembles the sword, that consumes the evil / transforms it into light and warmth), craft dragons from clay, branches, roots, wood modelling medium*, craft Michael angels (or use the angels of the nativity) and have it face evil / the dragon, paint a picture of the dragon fight on a piece of glass or acrylic glass, build a wooden sword and paint it gold / silver, dragon fight games, dragon hunt, fly kites, Michael markets (used to be a holiday). Many fairy tales and legends take up the motive of Michael (St. Beatus, St. George, the seven-headed dragon etc), but also true stories, for example about Joan of Arc, who was called to the rescue of France by the archangel Michael, or reports of the experiences of people from modern days, which were saved from attack by heavenly guards or fighters.

* mix and knead two cups fine sawdust with one cup of flour and add water until it forms into a firm, malleable dough; can be dried in a warm room and painted.

Market Scales Ritual: A dark stone on one side symbolises the evil. Everything one experienced / did / saw / heard something good or beautiful a small pebble or gem is put on the opposite side. It won't be long until the positive has more weight and the scales will tip in favour of the good side. That way the many small glimmers of light in everyday life 'defeat' the seeming superiority of evil or the exaggerated bad.

Michael and the topic of the separation of spirits was taken up in **art and music** countless times. Here only two examples: Cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach, "Es erhub sich ein Streit" (a fight was raised), and the image of Marc Chagall, "Fall of the Angel".

Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels

2. October: Memorial of our heavenly companions

Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels – 2. October

In the catholic tradition the whole month of October is dedicated to the guardian angels.

Angel (Hebrew mal'ak) means 'messenger'.

"For He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. ", Psalm 91,11.

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews, 1,14.

The **bible** refers to angels in around 300 passages.

Angels (good and bad) are known to all religions and cultures.

Their wings are signs, that angels are not bound to time and space. They often appear unexpectedly and never disappear without having brought about something. Angels, similarly to devout humans, are called sons and children of God. The difference is merely in their appearance. Since angels are able as well to choose with intellect and free will between good and evil, time ago here was the so called War in Heaven during which some of them fell (see chapter on Michaelmas). Ever since evil angels can lead humans into temptation. Humans are incarnated angels on their way back to God. If a human dies, many people say: He is with the angels now.

Every person has one (or several) spiritual companions / guides. Each is free to choose whether to listen to them or internally, actively contact them. However, inspiration and breakthroughs cannot be forced. There are many reports of experiences about the workings of angels. They can take on the form of a human. They can appear in visions and dreams. It is their purpose, to make the will of God known to men or to fulfil divine directives. Evil angels lead humans into temptation.

Motive: The guardian angel accompanies the person from birth until death.

Themes: Protection and guidance, but also the settling into a predestined fate; inner voice or external declarations of a person, who personally give us an 'answer' and where we feel, that an angel might have inspired them; meaningful events or encounters, in which a higher guidance participated. In dreams too we can receive decisive hints or comfort. Careful: A guardian angel does not protect from all hardship! Experiences of misfortune, suffering and illnesses are part of human existence and learning, and are at the same time fields of practice and growth in which our personality and soul can mature.

Rituals: Draw angel cards, create an angel corner or an angel path, learn angel songs and dances, burn dried herbs or vaporise heavenly fragrances. For example: frankincense for help in prayer and meditation, juniper for the purification of the atmosphere, cedar and arolla pine for strength, neroli, rose, mimosa, orange to lighten the mood. Combine fragrances at will.

Crafts: Draw images of angels, make collages (themes: protection, inspiration,...) paint over a painting, create a set of angel cards, fold a cootie catcher and write angel wishes in it, paint a portable angel on a flat stone or glue a miniature angel picture behind a glass pearl, but out / put together paper plate angels, craft an angel figure from clay, wool, felt, cloth, wire, wood, feathers, coloured paper, wrapping paper ect.

Support Angel Contact: read books about experiences with angels; name your angel; make room for

moments of quiet, discuss concerns internally with your angel and listen for an answer (sometimes it helps to think what we, as guardian angel, would advise another person in a similar situation); listen to the voice of the heart that only wants the best for us; in a meditation take a trip with your guardian angel into the spiritual world, consciously call on / greet / thank / call for guidance to your angel before sleep and after waking; invite the angel to pray to God together; ask the angel for a dream; take signs and acts of providence to hear; generally preserve a positive, joyful disposition. Closeness of an angel is felt through an unexplainable feeling of elation, lightness, 'wanting-to-hug-the-world' feeling. Sometimes you can feel soft reproach, a bad conscience, repentance about words or deeds. Some even experience soft touches, see angels as light phenomena, smell sweet fragrances, or hear heavenly music, often singing.

Francis of Assisi

4. October: Anniversary of Francis (1181-1226), who lived as servant of Christ, his fellow humans and all of nature.

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) – 4. October

As the son of a rich cloth merchant in Assisi, his name was Giovanni Bernardone. Because his mother was French, he was called Francesco (the little French) by his father. The latter bought him free from captivity as prisoner of war = turning point in his life. He was initially born to a rich family, but gave away everything he owned and became an itinerant preacher (famous example Preaching to the Birds), demonstrated solidarity to the poor and sick, received the wounds of Christ, turned blind, praised all of creation (canticle of the sun). Other: He put on the first nativity involving grown people.

Motive: As a follower of Christ, praise the entirety of creation and serve it with joy.

Crafts: Build a bird house, build a bird feeder or fill walnut shells with coconut fat and sunflower seeds, build chestnut-animals, cut out / shape animals of salt dough, Fimo or clay (e.g. as Christmas ornaments) ect.

Some people carve a smiling pumpkin lantern on Saint Francis of Assisi's Day or on Saint Martin's Day, rather than an evil looking jack-o'-lantern. The leftover material from hollowing out the pumpkin can be used to make soup.

Symbols: Monk's frock, walking staff, all animals, particularly birds, since 1980 4. October is also World Animal Day.

Raphael

24. October: Festival in honour of the archangel Raphael, God's great angel of healing

Raphael – 24. October

Until 1967 the festival took place on 24. October, today also 29. September.

Name Raphael: God heals

Raphael is the big redeemer and is the archetype of all guardian angels. As healing, and therefore leading back to order, angel, he is an opposite of the bringer of chaos, Lucifer.

The Book of Tobit is included in Catholic bibles, whereas in reformed bibles it is often excluded or included among the apocrypha. Content:

Tobias is accompanied by an unrecognised angel. He finds a bride, Sarah, whose former husbands were all killed in the wedding night by a demon. Through the burning of the heart and liver of a fish the angel Raphael frees Sarah from this curse. Returned home, Tobias heals his blind father with the help of Raphael

and the use of fish-bile. The prayers for healing by both Sarah, as well as Tobit's blind father, play an important role in the story. Raphael revered as is the patron of travellers, emigrants, pharmacists, doctors, the blind and the sick.

Themes: Journey of life towards God, from darkness to light, from need and suffering to redemption and healing, from blind to seeing – to be understood in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Similarly, Raphael metaphorically leads from winter to spring.

Motive: Being a servant / companion (= Greek: therapon) to suffering people; stand by each other in comfort and healing.

Symbols: Jar of ointment as symbol of all remedies; fish-liver for life, fish-heart for love, fish-bile for pain, suffering (= needed in order to recognise illness and being healed / becoming whole, holy); even in old Jewish traditions the fish was symbolic of the future Messiah and thus became a symbol of Jesus Christ, the most powerful of all healers.

Colours: In the Jewish mysticism Raphael is associated with the healing colour green. Green stands for hope and is often – alongside rose colour – the colour of the heart chakra.

Implementation Proposals: Pray for sick people, make healing salves (see chapter on the Blessing of Herbs), gift each other a soothing massage or other therapeutic treatments. Craft fishes from different materials (e.g. as keyring decorations). Use fishes as meals, pastry and table decorations. Visit to an institution for the blind, take care of a blind person, donate to the blind. Paint pictures about the Tobit-Story or put it on as a play. Discussions of the following questions: Was I ever 'struck blind' and was unable to recognise something vital? What brought on the change? Where / how have I experienced a wholesome company or rescue in my life in the form of a beloved person, doctor or the guardian angel? Where / how can I be such a companion for others?

Halloween – 31. October

Etymology:

"All Hallow's Eve" (= eve before All Soul's Day) or hallowed evening.

Evening / Night before All Soul's Day (31. October / 1. November), possibly of Celtic origin.

Samhain: End of summer, begin of the darker half of the year, Otherworldly-themes; probably the last of three harvest festivals and Celtic New Year. → A direct evolution from the Celtic Samhain to the Christian All Soul's festival is historically difficult to prove, despite similarities in themes.

Themes: Fear, cold shivers, death, spirits, facing the uncanny and repressed dark sides. It is a human need to contemplate the themes of death / dying / spirits / fear. Halloween provides playful incentives, but unfortunately also dangerous transgressions of limits. Halloween partially displaced the processions with turnip- or other lanterns of Saint Martin's Day.

Customs: Hollow out pumpkins, carve grimaces into the sides and light up with a candle; decorations with black cats, witches, bats, frogs, owls, spiders; children go from door to door dressed as vampires, witches, skeletons or other grisly figures to ask for candy with the phrase "trick or treat". This custom was brought to America and back to Europe by Irish emigrants.

All Soul's Day (catholic)

1. / 2. November: Memory of deceased saints and our beloved in heaven

Totensonntag (= Sunday of the Dead)

Last Sunday of November: memory of our dead beloved

All Soul's Day (1. / 2. November) **Totensonntag / Sunday of the Dead** (last Sunday in November)

Generally: memorials and rituals for the dead are found in all religions.

Relation to Nature: withering of nature

Themes: Connection to the deceased. From November to 6. January the veil to the spiritual world is thinner; the gates to the Otherworld are partially open.

The Origin of our memorials is possibly linked to the Celtic traditions or Samhain; however this is historically difficult to prove, despite thematic similarities.

Catholic All Saint's Day:

Memorial of all saints (= role models). Since the 9th century, catholic memorial of the people canonized by the pope. In early Christendom all baptized people were called 'saint'!

Catholic All Soul's Day:

Memorial of all deceased. Praying for soul that cannot come to rest.

Reformed Totensonntag (Sunday of the Dead):

Reformed memorial since 1814, before which sometimes even ringing of the bells and sermons were forbidden. Reason: To curb an exaggeration cult of the dead.

Motive: Remembrance of the deceased and one's own mortality.

Symbol: Light for the life of the immortal soul, for hope and comfort.

Near-Death and Post-Death Experiences, Messages from Beyond, Bible

Near-death experiences such as a tunnel, a film of one's life, unearthly light, other worlds and dimensions, encounters with deceased / spiritual guides / angels ect. are often, but not exclusively, experienced as positive. Countless reports of near-death experiences imply an out of body consciousness. For examples, some newly awakened coma patients have knowledge of events that took place far away, sometimes even without the knowledge of doctors and family; people who were blind at birth were able to describe the looks of the doctors treating them or the sickroom in detail.

Near-death experiences: People of all cultures experiences and describe encounters with deceased, who call on them from 'beyond' and show them impressive proofs of their spiritual / continued existence.

Apparently there is an invisible or ethereal dimension, a heaven or an Otherworld.

Messages from beyond, who are passed on by angels or the deceased themselves, talk of that other world.

Unfortunately there are also messages from unranked spirits from lower regions or even demons from the realm of the dead (→ critical examinations necessary, see Pentecost).

„It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.“

1. Corinthians 15, 44; "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11, 25

Customs: Visit of graves with the congregation and / or members of the families in the graveyard; put lights and flowers on graves, think about deceased and pray for them. Light candles at home, talk about deceased or talk to them in thoughts, look at their pictures, put up a gallery of ancestral portraits or look at a family tree, reminiscing (what in particular did he love or could he do well? Where did he like to be, which music listen to?), make peace with deceased, paint a picture for them, send good wishes, possibly ask for their help, pray. Dead pets can be reminisced about as well.

Memories of role models like Mother Theresa, Albert Schweizer, Henri Dunant, Mahatma Gandhi ect., who stood up for peace, justice, and the welfare of underprivileged people. How can we support modern 'saints'? How can we ourselves become heroes or 'saints of everyday life'?

Meditate on ones own mortality: Death could arrive unexpectedly early or very sudden. Could I go without repentance? Was might I want to change? How do I imagine my future life?

In bygone centuries, additional covers were put on the table, a guest bed prepared or food (e.g. a sheaf) hung in trees, so that former family member or other spiritual visitors would feel welcome and that way not wreak havoc. For not only good beings were expected, but the revenge of the deceased and the unholy workings of evil spirits or adversary powers from the realm of the dead were feared.

Martin of Tours

11. November: Anniversary of Martin (316-397), a Roman soldier who converted to Christianity (famous picture: Martin divides his coat to share it with a beggar)

Martin of Tours (316-397) – 11. November

He was born in Hungary as the son of a Roman Captain. His parents were heathens, but he came into contact with Christianity already as a child. Martin also became a Roman soldier. After the division of the coat with a beggar and the subsequent dream (Christ dressed in half a coat → see Luke 3,11 and 6,29), he was baptised and refused to do military service. In 374 he was consecrated as bishop of Tours against his will. See also the legend of the geese who revealed his hiding place. He went on many missionary journeys, healed many and was very close to the people.

Symbols: Red coat (protects, warms, envelops), lantern (brings light into the darkness), goose

Leitmotif: Sharing requires modesty, kindness, and willingness to make sacrifices. Who needs a piece of my coat?

Customs: Earlier, the advent time (six weeks of fasting) started on Saint Martin's Day with presents for the maids, farm hands, and children. This custom was superseded by Saint Nicholas. In some places 11. November was the end of the farm year, tribute was mainly paid in natural produce. It was also regarded as the beginning of winter, open together with the autumnal ceremonial cattle drive from mountain pastures into valleys, sometimes accompanied by dressed up, loud figures. It was also the appointed day for the butchering of the animals whom one did not want to feed over winter. In some regions the 11.11 is the official beginning of carnival. In some cases turnip lanterns or other lantern processions are organised, goose is eaten (see for example the custom of the "Gansabhauet" in Sursee CH*), plants 'Martin's bulbs' (snow drops or other spring flowers), decorates with colourful autumn leaves and begins, depending on the region, with advent decorations and advent customs (drink the first advent tea ect.)

Some people carve a smiling pumpkin on Saint Francis of Assisi's Day rather than a jack-o'-lantern. The leftover material from hollowing out the pumpkin can be used to make soup.

*In some Swiss villages a dead goose is strung up on Saint Martin's Day. Young men or women dressed up in a red coat and with a gilded sun-mask and bandaged eyes try to chop its head off in one swing.

In Language: In German the siren of an ambulance is also called 'Martinshorn' (horn of Martin). Chapel is derived from the Latin cappa, which means headdress or coat with a hood, because the coat of Martin was kept as a relic in a small, private sanctuary, who was because of it called capella. Subsequently the expression was used for all small houses of God without their own clergy.

Elizabeth of Hungary

19. November: Anniversary of the princess Elizabeth (1207-1231), who chose poverty in order to assist the sick and needy.

Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231) – 19. November

The Hungarian princess was engaged at 4 and married at 14 to Count Ludwig of Thuringia. Three children were born from this exceedingly happy marriage, but she lost her husband at the early age of 20. She turned to the poor and sick, like her role model Francis of Assisi. Because she gave away too much, she was shunned by court. With the indemnity she built a hospital and died after a number of years of total self-sacrifice at the age of 24. Soon after her death she was canonized and is the patron saint of widows, beggars, bakers and has given her name to many hospitals, churches and aid organizations (e.g. "Elisabethenwerk", CH)

Famous legend: Already as a princess she often secretly distributed food to the poor from the supplies of the castle, but was caught by her malevolent bother-in-law. However instead of bread there were roses in her basket.

Leitmotif: Renunciation of worldly goods, fame and renown.

Symbols: Bread as food for the poor, jug for drink and the washing of the poor, rose as sign of love for the poor.

Customs: Craft roses (from tissue paper, modelling clay, raw wool or felt), decorate bread or cakes with roses, bake Elisabeth-Fruit-Bread.