

30+ ideas for celebrating the feasts of All Saints and All Souls

On Halloween night, after our children are in bed, I get busy taking down all our Halloween decorations (bats, monsters, skeletons—and yes, we celebrate Halloween with enthusiasm and a certain Catholic flair, which you can read about [here](#)). Then I put up our All Saints' Day decorations so that when the kids wake up, they find themselves in "The Land of the Saints and Pearly Gates." It is on All Saints' Day that the drama of these three fall holidays (Halloween, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day) reaches a climax, and the real party starts—because the battle against evil and death has already been won.

As G. K. Chesterton famously pointed out, evil is pretty monotonous, and you see that in the sameness of Halloween themes: pumpkins, witches, ghosts, skeletons, bats, blah, blah, blah. Boring. Nameless. The saints, on the other hand, are exciting. There's every kind of saint you can think of, from every country and occupation, and with every kind of personality. They're never boring, because God calls each of us by our own name to our own unique mission. All Saints' Day revels in the fact that each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Here are some of my favorite ideas for decorations, games, costumes, and food.

Decorations

- Shower of Roses is a one-stopshop for all thing All Saints'. I've used Jessica's free, printable [All Saints' Day banner](#) year after year.
- No printer? How about a [prayer card banner](#)? If you're

like me, you have hundreds of prayer cards and don't know what to do with them. Clothes pins, string, and prayer cards make a beautifully unique banner to celebrate your favorite saints!

- Another thing I like to do is to decorate doorways and stairways with white balloons and streamers to represent the "Pearly Gates." Don't forget to include St. Peter!
- Do you have lots of saint pictures or statues? I pull out each saint's statue on his or her feast day and keep the rest hidden throughout the year. But on All Saints' Day, they all come out!
- Decorate the walls with coloring pages. This [beautifully detailed saints coloring book](#) is available from [OSV Catholic Bookstore](#). Or let the children draw pictures of what they think Heaven will be like.
- Buy yellow and white streamers, balloons, plates, cups, etc., as those are the colors of the Vatican.

Games

- **Rose Toss.** Color a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, or use a framed image. Pin or place it on a burlap sack to imitate St. Juan Diego's tilma, then hang the sack on a chair. Then let the kids attempt to toss roses into the tilma.
- **[Guessing Jars](#).** Attach pictures of the saints to the outside of jars, then fill each jar with candy that relates to that saint. Party goers guess how many candies/treats fill the jar; the person with the closest guess gets to take it home. [Shower of Roses](#) does all the work for you with ideas and printables.
- **Find the cross.** We have a Helen in our home, so we play this game on her feast day as well. All you need is a crucifix, or even a paper cross. Then you hide it, and party goers see if they can "find the cross" like St. Helen did.

- **Coloring/crafts.** Put out a variety of coloring pages and crayons for anyone interested in downtime after all the excitement and treats. If you are really ambitious put out some prayer cards, craft scissors, glue, and scrapbook paper so the children can make uplifting greeting cards.
- **Canonize the Saints.** I found this game years ago on [Catholic Icing](#). This is a ring toss game, except that the idea is to toss the rings (made from glow sticks so they become “halos”) over statues of the saints. After a few mishaps with our porcelain statues, we now have a set of pillar prayer candles from the dollar store with pictures of the saints on them.
- **Saint Bingo.** This is [bingo](#), with saints instead of numbers.
- **Michael Stomp.** Tie a balloon to a rubber band, then put the rubber band around each player’s foot. Once the music starts, each player tries to stomp everyone else’s balloon without popping their own. The last man standing wins! Sounds like a riot. [Full instructions here.](#)
- **Saint Symbol Match.** Match a small symbol of a saint to their picture. You could organize this game in a variety of ways from a large party to a Montessori prayer corner at home. Get the [full instructions at Shower of Roses](#).
- **Mary Magdalene Perfume Match.** Kids try to match the scent of different “perfumes” (in reality, food extracts). Get the details from [Waltzing Matilda](#).

Costumes

I’m normally a “go big or go home” kinda of girl but throwing together a costume for an All Saints’ party doesn’t have to be that hard. Last year our children went as “Padre Pio,” “Teresa of Avila,” “Patrick,” and the “Infant of Prague.” (I understand that the Infant of Prague is not a saint, but my son’s dimples are nothing short of divine and he was oh-so-

proud to be little Jesus.)

- Symbols are the key to a great All Saints' costume. Our little Teresa of Avila carried a book and feather (quill pen); Padre Pio had fingerless gloves and beard; Patrick had a shamrock and crozier; and the Infant of Prague had a globe (a blue ball with gold ribbon and small gold cross glued on) and a crown (I made one out of scrap cloth, craft jewels, and cardboard I spray painted gold). Figure out your favorite saint's symbols and you're halfway home.
- As far as clothing goes, it might be worth investing in some basic robes from Oriental Trading as the foundation for your costume. Alternatively, there are a variety of very easy costume ideas online at [Catholic Icing](#) and [Catholic All Year](#). Or be creative with what retail stores are selling for Halloween. We bought a "Roman" costume for our daughter that was great for St. Helen and could be great for a lot of other female Roman saints. We also have an ornate queen's gown that has been worn for St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Friends of ours had their son dress as a pilot for St. Joseph Cupertino. I love seeing how creative people can be!
- Sewing is not a skill of mine, although last year I did manage to make a royal cape for our "Infant of Prague" using scrap red cloth, a large gold button, gold ribbon, and some fabric glue. I've also had a friend make gorgeous *novus ordo* and traditional vestments and alter linens as Easter gifts for our boys, and a Carmelite habit for our daughter. They get a lot of use, and the albs are quite versatile when it comes to saint costumes.

Food

When it comes to food, my parties could go from "fun" to

“occasion of sin” real fast if I’m not careful. Here are some food ideas that I’ve categorized as easy, medium, and “slow clap.”

Easy

- Gold fish and pretzel nets to represent Sts. Peter and Andrew. “Be a fisher of men!”
- Candy canes or peppermint candies to represent St. Nicholas.
- Little loafs of bread for St. Elizabeth of Hungary.
- Letter cookies (available at Trader Joe’s) representing St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.
- Twizzlers tied in knots for Our Lady, Undoer of Knots. (Note: These don’t work so well when made in advance. Mary works fast, people—the knots will be undone by the time your party starts.)
- Pretzel sticks for St. Bernadette’s firewood.
- Anything with honey for St. Rita, St. Ambrose, or St. Bede.
- Heart or chocolate candies for St. Valentine.

Medium

- It’s long been on my list to make brownie scapulars for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. You can get the recipe at [Catholic Cuisine](#); pick your favorite Carmelite saint to go with them.
- How about these [mini Bibles](#) for any of the Evangelists or writers?
- Any national cuisine can be transformed into a meal made for a saint. Italian, French, Polish, Irish, Mexican...pick your cuisine, pick your saint. The first time I ever tried pirogues was for the feast of Pope St. John Paul the Great. My kids loved them. (Don’t tell anyone they were from the freezer aisle!) Check out

[Catholic Cuisine](#) for some great ideas from a number of contributors for Feast Days and Liturgical feasting. You'll be amazed and maybe even discover a saint you've never heard of before. I know I have.

But wait! There's more! The Feast of All Souls

You think you're done celebrating after two days (Halloween and All Saints)? Are you kidding? Come on, we're Catholic—of course we can't forget the souls in purgatory!

- November is the month dedicated to the Souls in Purgatory, the Church Suffering. Last year, as the service project organizer for our [Little Flowers club](#), I arranged a walking rosary at a cemetery on a beautiful fall morning with a potluck brunch afterwards. I pooled together a great program with a Rosary designed for the Souls in Purgatory and other various prayers, and had a list of all the family and friends our group wished to pray for that day. One of my favorite quotes I found for the program cover was from St. Therese herself (how fitting for our group!): "The world is thy ship and not thy home." It was a success and is definitely a tradition now.
- Did you know that many cultures make bread on the Feast of All Souls? Because after two days of candy and feasting, who wants bread?
- Speaking of overdoing it, if you still have candy lurking around the house two days after Halloween, consider printing off one of these [prayer sheets](#) from Shower of Roses and have your children offer a piece of candy and a prayer every day in November for the Souls in Purgatory. Mom and Dad can decide where the candy actually goes. Ahem. Don't forget to offer up other little unpleasanties throughout the month . . . like, say, your children's sugar detox.

- If you place images of saints around your home on All Saints, consider placing images of family members or friends who have died around your home for All Souls. Light some candles and say some prayers. And while we traditionally refer to the “Poor Souls in Purgatory,” remember that they *know* they are going to heaven someday, so they are one step ahead of us; ask for their prayers in return!