Diary of a Catholic mom: How to celebrate All Saints Day

Throughout the year, we take certain days to remember certain saints for the striking power of love, courage and faith they witnessed through their actions during life. These are the "big name" saints – Peter and Paul, Thérèse of Lisieux, Francis, Catherine of Siena and others. But on Nov. 1 each year, the Church sets aside a day to celebrate every saint, those we remember by name and those we do not. We remember those who have been officially canonized, but also all those who have "run the race" and have been united with God in heaven without the benefit of earthly recognition.

However, the feast of All Saints is about more than remembering the good deeds of those who went before us. Because, in celebrating these "unknown" saints, we also joyfully celebrate our own call to become saints, to be holy and beloved of God.

This feast is one of my favorites, but it often becomes lost for many of us with small children in the excitement of Halloween. Though costumes and candy can be a lot of fun, there are ways that Catholic parents can work to highlight this holy feast in the eyes of our children.

As the feast of All Saints approaches, perhaps your family could spend the month of October learning about the lives of the saints. Here are some ideas:

• Pick a saint story to read at bedtime and then, later in the week, do an activity connected to the saint, such as gardening with St. Francis or serving at a soup kitchen with St. Vincent de Paul.

• Talk about the heroic virtues of the saints and how they used their gifts to serve God. Talk about the special gifts

you see in your own children and how they are called to be saints.

• Consider encouraging your child to dress as a saint for Halloween, or to dress up as a saint for All Saints Day.

• Host an All Saints party. Add a litany of the saints to your family prayer.

These are all ways to help your children get to know the saints and, through their intercession and their witness, to become closer to God.

In learning about the saints, we learn about ourselves and about the call to holiness that has been implanted in every human heart – the hope and yearning that we will one day join these saints in the heart of God. A very happy All Saints Day to all of us pilgrim saints!