

Halloween, All Saint's and All Souls Day: A Triple Celebration

For parents of children in today's world of commercial or scary Halloween characters it is even more important to know the history of the Catholic/Christian tradition of AllHallowtide, Hallowtide or Hallowmas, as you establish your home traditions and set the values on which your family decisions are based.

We know that it is educationally important to be able to explain to children where a tradition/decision comes from in building family practices and expectations, which is why it is foundational to faith development for your children to know that Halloween is part of our Catholic faith tradition. Dressing up for Halloween comes from the French, Jack-O-Lanterns come from the Irish tradition (originally turnips), and begging for treats comes from the English tradition of going door to door begging for "soul cakes", promising to pray for a family's loved ones.

The missing link that you as parents are called to create and honor is the connection between All Saint's and All Soul's Day with Halloween. All Saint's Day is a Holy Day of Obligation and part of the three days known as the "Days of the Dead". The Latin American tradition of celebrating the Day of the Dead (el Día de los Muertos) also has become popular in the United States. This holiday falls on Nov. 1 and Nov. 2 and is a time of prayer and remembrance of friends and family members who have died. All Saint's Day and All Souls Day give your family the opportunity to pray for and remember the deceased members of your family, similar to el Dia de los Muertos. It is a great opportunity to share memories and stories of their lives, their inspirational traits and the integrity of their faith life in shaping who you are as parents. It is also an opportunity to talk about the heroes of the Catholic Church. In this day and age of Marvel comic superheroes and Disney movie character costumes we have the chance to talk about real heroes that have changed the world for the better by how they lived their lives: St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Elizabeth Ann



Seton, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Martin de Porres, St. Maximilian Kolbe, to name a few. One of the "treats" for the Days of the Dead, could be a book on the lives of the saints, holy cards to honor their patron saints or a saint of inspiration in their lives, or a book about a saint and the difference his or her actions made in this world.

The traditional Halloween celebrations do not need to be shied away from, but balanced in the context of our faith and the events that surround us. Attending Mass as a family or as part of a school Mass, or the opportunities for saint's parties, filled with crafts and service activities are a great beginning to blending the commercial and the faith-filled observance of these Catholic Church days of tradition and obligation. Fall festival parties or Harvest Festivals are all possible options and alternatives. You can check out the [Catholic Toolbox](#) for games and crafts and print-ready materials. You can review [educationworld.com](#) for ideas from UNICEF and there is always Christian [Pinterest](#) for a Christian Halloween.

The key to this celebration is that we work to tie together the understanding of where Halloween has its origin and beginning and how it starts the celebration of real world superheroes of the church and the people we aspire to be in this complex world.

This short prayer helps us remember the saints and souls and ties together these three fall events:

Father,
All-Powerful and Ever-Living God,
we rejoice in the holy men and women
of every time and place
May their prayers bring us your forgiveness and love
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Contributed by Kitty Quinn, Office of Catholic Schools,
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