

All Saints & All Souls Activities for Families

St. Martin of Tours (Feast Day: November 11)

Prepare a sacred place for celebrating St. Martin of Tours feast day. On a prayer table or your kitchen table, spread a cloth of dark blue and decorate it with confetti or sticker stars, a holy card or statue of St. Martin of Tours (if you have one), a pillar candle, and many votive or tea light candles. Darken the room as much as possible. Gather your family around the table and introduce St. Martin using the facts below. Then, reverently light the pillar candle and pray:

Jesus, you are the Light of the World. Sometimes we feel the darkness of sadness, of confusion, of anger. Help us look for your Light. Help us be a light to others, as Martin was. Amen.

Light the remaining candles and ask family members to offer prayers.

Introducing the theme

- Right now, we have more hours of darkness than hours of daylight. Soon it will be Advent, when we see how darkness teaches us about the goodness of God in the world.
- Jesus is called the Light of the World. One aspect of this “light” is that Jesus taught us to help others.
- St. Martin is one of Jesus’ “lights.” Martin (b. 316?, d. 397) was forced to serve in the army. Become a Christian at age 18, he managed to leave the army and later become a priest and bishop. He was an amazing teacher and leader, but he is remembered most for helping a poor man.
- When Martin was a young soldier, he met a man so poor he had few clothes and was very cold. Martin cut his own cloak into two pieces and gave half to the other man. That night, Martin dreamt of the man wrapped in the cloak. When the man turned around, he had the face of Jesus.
- In several countries, such as Germany, children celebrate the feast of St. Martin with lanterns to symbolize Jesus’ light to the world and Martin’s caring for people. As his feast day is in the dark time of the year, the lanterns help the children see how one person’s light can light up the darkness. They walk through the night streets singing songs and carrying lanterns.

(From Religion Teacher’s Journal, October 2009. See also ReligionTeachersJournal.com)

Name Days

Names are important. Say a name and an image instantly comes to mind. St. Therese—flowers. St. Francis—animals. Mother Teresa—blue and white veil gleaming amid the squalor of impoverished Calcutta. A name identifies us as a member of a family; it is the means by which we address one another and by which we respond. A name is the first and most basic part of our identity.

In Catholic culture, names are traditionally connected with saints. First churches, then children, were named after saints. Saints serve as intercessors (people who pray for us) and role models. They connect us to the community of believers throughout the ages.

Choosing a Patron Saint

Even if your child is not named after a particular saint, they may choose a patron saint based on their middle name, a parent’s or grandparent’s name, a saint whose feast day falls on his/her birthday, or a saint they admire based on the cause associated with him/her.

There are many websites devoted to saints and saint biographies. A few good ones are:

- Catholic.org/saints—organized alphabetically, by feast day, patron causes, and more. Includes extensive biographical information.
- Americancatholic.org/features/saints/byname.asp—limited to well-known saints and offers less extensive biographies.
- Catholic-forum.com/saints/patron02.htm—an enormous alphabetical list with biographical highlights.

Once your children have chosen a saint, have them learn more about that saint.

- When did this saint live?
- What are a couple of interesting facts about this saint?
- Is this saint a patron of a cause or group? Why?
- What is one thing they admire about this saint?
- What is one way they might be more like this saint?

Celebrating the Saints

Gather around your prayer or kitchen table.

Sing a song, such as “When the Saints Go Marching In,” or another familiar “saint song.”

Read Revelation 7:2-4,9-14.

Give each person a small, unlit candle.

Go around the circle using the following dialogue (*adapted by Miriam Malone, SNJM, for use with Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*):

- Parent: (Child’s name), you have been called by name. You shall be called God’s delight, because God rejoices in you!
- Family: Alleluia!

Following the dialogue, light the child’s candle.

Finish by singing the Litany of Saints.

(From Religion Teacher’s Journal, October 2009. See also ReligionTeachersJournal.com)

Name Day Triptych

A triptych consists of three panels that fold inward. It is used to display religious images. To make a triptych, choose an 8 ½” x 11” sheet of cardstock or a sheet of construction paper. Turn it sideways and fold the right and left edges to the middle, forming a center section measuring 5 ½” x 8 ½” and two outer sections each 2 ¾” x 8 ½”. Lay it flat again and decorate the inside.

- In the center, write the saint’s name and glue or draw an image or images. This could include any symbol traditionally associated with the saint, such as a shamrock for St. Patrick or a key for St. Peter.
- On the left pane, write the saint’s birth and death dates and a few interesting facts, such as:
 - Patron saint of...
 - Know for...
 - Interesting stories
 - What I most admire about this person’s life...
- On the right panel, list two to three things that you can do to be more like your name saint.

Remembrance Altar – Remembering All Souls

Every person is touched by death. Death is inevitable. Everything on earth will die: people, animals, plants, etc. Death is mysterious. We don't know what happens when our souls leave our bodies. Death can be scary, and yet, death can also bring peace.

The Church remembers all who have died through the month of November. Invite your family to remember loved ones and friends who have died by creating a Remembrance Altar.

- Set up a table or create a corner in your house for your Remembrance Altar.
- Decorate your altar with a colored cloth – white (for baptism and new life), a harvest color like gold or orange, green (for life).
- If you have pictures of family members, loved ones, or friends who have died, place their pictures on your altar.
- Add other items that help you remember the people who have died, such as the collar of a beloved dog, a cat's dish, a favorite book, a fishing pole for grandpa who loved to fish, etc. Be creative.

Leave your Remembrance Altar up through November. At the end of each day, gather around your altar for your prayers.

Tin Can Luminary/Lantern

Supplies:

- Tin can, any size: soup can, coffee can, vegetable can, etc.
- Nail
- Hammer
- Water
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Stickers (if desired)

1. Wash out the can.
2. Cut a piece of construction paper to fit the outside of the can. (Don't put the construction paper on the can yet.)
3. Fill the can with water and put it in the freezer.
4. While the water in the can is freezing, color and decorate one side of the construction paper. To remember loved ones who have died, write their names and draw pictures of things they treasured and loved to do.
5. When the water in the can is totally frozen, use the nail and hammer to create small holes all over the can. (The ice in the can keeps the can from denting and collapsing while you create the nail holes.) Note: You will want to put down a towel or do this near a sink because as the ice melts, it will drip.
6. After you finish creating the holes, let the ice melt and pour out the water.
7. When the can has been emptied of the water, tape the decorated construction paper to the outside of the can.
8. Gently use the nail to poke holes in the construction paper in conjunction with the holes in the can.
9. Put sand in the bottom of the can.
10. Add a tea light, votive, or small pillar candle to the can, depending on the size of the can.
11. On dark nights, light the candle.
12. You can put this luminary/lantern outside or keep it in the house.