

St. Joseph's Family Activities

October Saints and Celebrations



<https://www.theannunciation.org.uk/resources/>

The saints teach us to pray

Prayer is something that we all need to practice! This month we have some very “prayerful” saints who show us that prayer is not just about asking, but at its heart, it's about being close to Jesus Christ as we think about Him and what He has done for us.

October is also the month of Our Lady of the Rosary and there is a suggestion of making a one-decade Rosary with children. The Rosary is a wonderful prayer because although we repeat “Hail Marys” in fact what we are really doing is contemplating, (thinking about) moments in the life of Jesus Christ. For example, we begin by thinking about, or visualising, the Angel Gabriel speaking to Mary and her response, then as we say the next ten “Hail Marys” we think about Mary’s hard journey to Elizabeth and the way the two women greeted each other, The prayers are there to help us keep focussed and we conclude each “mystery” with the Our Father. With young children it's better to have fewer “Hail Marys” and may be if you can find it, a picture of each of the scenes of Jesus’ life. The Rosary therefore is a very powerful way to pray and meditate on Christ’s work of our salvation and how His mother supported Him.

One other thing about the rosary is that as we begin to pray the rosary, we can say “I am praying for....” And Mary hears that and asks her Son to hear and answer our prayer.

These activities still reflect the four dimensions of our faith, as in everything we do, we are either learning or proclaiming the faith, celebrating it in the liturgy and the sacraments, living it in the context of the family and community and praying it.

The Holy Spirit window in St Peter's Basilica, Rome. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us in prayer. “Spirit” means “breath” and so we can think of the Holy Spirit as God's breath enabling us to think or speak to Him.



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There are three dimensions to the Church: those of us here on earth, journeying to the Father in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit; those in purgatory whose lives on earth have finished and who are being purified, and those in heaven, sharing in the divine life, for which we have all been created. For them, their joy is complete but because of that, they are eager for us to join them. Close to Our Lord, they intercede (pray) for us. The saints in heaven are more than the canonised saints the Church knows of, as the author of the Book of Revelation says, “I looked and saw a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, tribe and peoples and tongues...” (Rev.7:9).

The saints are our heroes. They come from all walks of life, from all around the world and all ages. We can always find a saint who inspires us and ask him or her to pray for us. So, celebrate your own saints' days, go to Mass if you can as there, the whole Church is united! We can't see the saints, but we join in with their praise in the Holy Holy Holy. Have something special to eat, light your baptism candle or another one if you don't have it, and regard the saints as special members of the family.

1st October, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus [St. Therese of Lisieux] (1873 - 1897)

St. Thérèse was born Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin and sadly her mother died when she was only four years old. Thérèse's family was a large one and her parents were both devout Catholics (who have also been canonised as Sts. Zélie and Louis Martin). Marie-Françoise-Thérèse was the youngest of nine children. All five surviving children, all girls, all became nuns.

St. Thérèse herself died at the age of 25 of tuberculosis. So, what was so special about her short life? Growing up, Thérèse had a great love of Jesus and from the age of 9, desperately wanted to join the Carmelite convent where her sisters were, but she was considered too young. She appealed to the bishop of Lisieux, and even to the Pope, and eventually, in 1888 she was permitted as a fifteen-year-old to join the convent. St. Thérèse so special realised that the way to be perfect in life was through little things. If we do little things well, then they all add up to big things. Thérèse was commanded to write a journal of her life. Reading it we see thoughts and desires and above all her faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Opposite, are some quotes from her autobiography on her experience of the sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession), Holy Communion and Confirmation. Her deep desire to receive these sacraments is an inspiration to us all. St. Thérèse's deep awareness that the sacraments are deep and personal encounters with Christ can inspire us to ponder on the wonder of receiving our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. We can recognise this as a gift rather than just something "we do."

Note also that receiving Holy Communion at every Mass was not the norm, especially for children. Every occasion of receiving the Lord was prepared for by fasting (from midnight) and going to Confession.

St. Thérèse on Sunday Mass and the Sacraments:

First Confession: She was about the age of 7 and was told that the tears of Jesus washed her soul clean. She always remembered the advice the priest gave her in her first confession was to love our Blessed Lady more and more.

Going to Mass: "There was nothing like Sunday, God's own holiday... dressed up like a princess we all went off to Church...I always used to listen attentively to the sermon, even if I didn't understand much of it."

First Holy Communion: Preparation began when she was 11. On receiving Jesus, she said, "So deep was my joy that tears of happiness were pouring down my cheeks... [the others who were surprised to see the tears] did not realise what happens when all the joys of heaven come flooding into a human heart."

The next day she longed to be able to receive Jesus again. "About a month later ... I took my courage in both hands and asked if I might go to Communion. To my surprise, the priest consented, and I found myself kneeling at the Holy Table between Papa and Marie" (one of her sisters). "This second Communion too has left touching memories...I kept repeating to myself the words of St Paul 'I am alive or rather, not I, it is Christ who lives in me'". Thérèse received special permission to communicate on all great feasts.

Confirmation: "I could never understand why people didn't take more trouble about it, this Sacrament which was all centred in love".

"My experience when the Holy Spirit came to me was not that of a great wind blowing, it was more like the whisper of the gentle breeze which Elijah heard on Mount Horeb." I was granted that day, the strength to suffer.

2nd October, Holy Guardian Angels

Learn the prayer to your guardian angel:

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here,
Ever this day, be at my side,



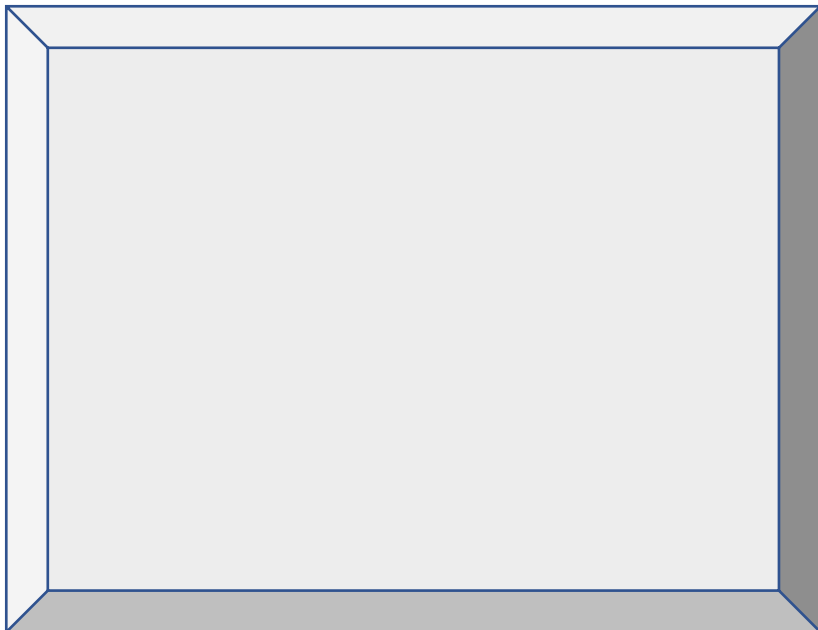
To light and guard,
Rule and guide.



Amen.

Remember to pray this every morning.

In the frame below, draw yourself and your guardian angel, and put it beside your bed.



4th October, St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis was the son of a rich man, and he gave up everything and relied on charity to live. Other men came to live with him, excited by the challenge of owning nothing. They wore the plainest of cloth (grey) and lived by preaching (telling people) the Good News of Jesus Christ. Unlike most religious orders up until then, they did not build enclosed monasteries but lived in towns and cities so that they could more easily reach people to tell them about Jesus.

Everything St. Francis did was to love and support the Church, and to help everyone to better understand what Jesus did for us. To that end, he created the first nativity scene with real people in a tableau in a cave, to help people understand the true meaning of Christmas. And of course, St. Francis was known for his love of all of God's creation; people as well as the natural world. See the last page for a suggestion of something to do to bring the natural world into your home.

It's quite a while until Advent, (just under 2 months) but maybe you can begin to think about making your own home-made nativity scene? If you start planning now, you will get it ready by December.



Go on a bug hunt outside and see how many different creatures you can find. Look out for beautiful spiders' webs in the morning.



5th October, St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938)

She was a Polish nun who promoted the devotion to the Divine Mercy of Jesus. She received this vision and directed another artist (Eugeniusz Kazimirowski) to paint what she saw. Since then, the image has been copied a number of times.

Sometimes the painting has the words, "Jesus I trust in you" written across the bottom.

Pray a simple version of the divine mercy chaplet:

- Pray x 1: *Our Father...*
- Pray x 10: *For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.*
- Pray x 3: *Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

If you are artistic, may be make your own copy of this image. You could use paints, pencils or even collage. (If you do this, please send me a photo to include in a future edition).

Think about the people you have hurt and say sorry to them.
Ask them to forgive you (show you mercy)



6th October, St. Bruno (1033-1101)

St Bruno was the founder of the Carthusians, an order of religious who mixed living in community and a solitary life of prayer. He was born in Cologne (Germany) but went to Rheims (France) to study. He returned home to be ordained but was invited back to his old school I Rheims to teach, and among his students was the later Pope Urban II.

Bruno began to realise that God was calling him to a life more dedicated to prayer and solitude with Jesus, but before he and his friends could act on their resolution, he was appointed as chancellor (the person who looked after the diocese's money) of the diocese of Rheims by the bishop. This Bishop sadly was not a good man and stole money from the diocese. Bruno and some others realised that the only way to change things was to get him removed. A special council was set up and the papal legate (the pope's representative) came to oversee matters. The Pope agreed that the bad bishop had to go, and instead asked Bruno to be the bishop instead! Bruno did not want this as he really wanted to leave all the teaching and administration behind and pray by himself.

Bruno and his companions ended up in a rocky desert in the diocese of Grenoble called Chartreuse. Here they built a church on the top of a rocky outcrop and some cells (individual rooms) nearby. They met in the church for Matins (morning prayers) and Vespers (evening prayer) and then spent most of the days praying alone in their cells. They ate once a day except on great feast days of the Church. To earn money, they copied books (there was no printing then, all books were hand copied).

Bruno's former student, Pope Urban II heard about his teacher and asked him to go to Rome to help him out and again, tried to make him a bishop. But Bruno instead was given permission to found another community, this time in Italy. This is where he died after a long and eventful life.

Books were beautifully illustrated with pictures and decorated with lots of images from the natural world. As you can imagine only the very richest of people could afford to own such books and they were willing to pay a lot of money for them. That is how St. Bruno and his Carthusian monks earned their money.

Can you copy this page from a prayer book. Send me photos of your work! Can you guess what the feast being celebrated is? (Answer at the bottom of the page.)



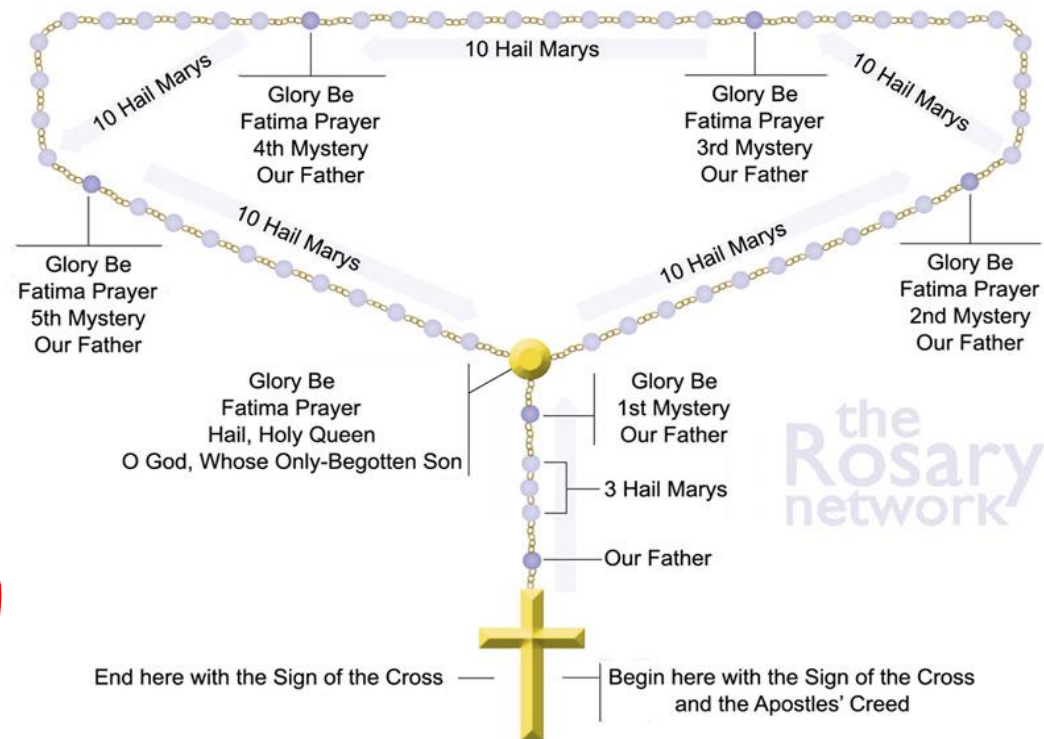
The feast would be the Baptism of Christ, celebrated in January.

7th October, Our Lady of the Rosary

October is the month of the rosary and it's a great time to begun to pray the rosary if it is not something that you regularly do.

See this link for details on how to pray the Rosary:

<https://therosarynetwork.org/one-page-sheet-how-to-pray-the-rosary-pdf/>



Next time you come to Mass, ask the priest to bless it and then keep it safe in a pretty box or bag.

How to make a one-decade Rosary

You will need: string or ribbon, 11 beads, a crucifix or cross (may be one that has fallen off a broken Rosary.)

1. Loop the string through the crucifix and hang it from the middle so that there is equal amount either side. Tie both ends together so that the crucifix is fixed securely in the middle of the string.
2. Thread both pieces of string through the first bead which is the Our Father/Glory be, bead, and if you can, tie an overhand knot to keep his bead in place.
3. Separate the two ends of the string and thread 5 beads on each side, joining them together so that there is now a loop with 10 beads, in addition to the single bead above the crucifix.

You are now ready to pray a decade of the rosary with the beads.

9th October, St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

John Henry Newman was a famous Anglican priest who taught at Oxford university. He was a great teacher and people loved to hear him explaining the Bible and other facts about Jesus. He loved to study the origins of faith in Jesus Christ and read a lot of books written by the early Church Fathers (men who lived in the first 400 years of the Church). John Henry Newman and his friends realised that the way we celebrate the liturgy is important and that the writings of the early Church were also valuable in coming to understand Jesus. He began to think that he ought to become a Catholic, but struggled with the idea for a long time. Eventually he decided that this was the right thing to do, and he was received into the Church on 9th October 1845. He went to Rome to study and became a Catholic priest, where he was ordained two years later. Coming back to England, he set up an oratory in Birmingham. An oratory is where priests live together as a community (rather than one by one in their own parishes). St. John Henry Newman continued to teach about the faith and was really interested in the way we think about our sins. He was also passionate that the laity (not just priests) should be allowed to study their faith. This was quite unusual in his day! Eventually He was created a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. He died in 1890 and was beatified in Birmingham by Pope Benedict XVI in 2020 and canonised by Pope Francis in October 2019.

He is the most recent Englishman to be canonised (declared a saint).

St John Henry Newman was not only a good teacher, he wrote beautifully too. Some of his poems have been set to Music, such as Edward Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" and some hymns. Below is a beautiful prayer which he wrote for bedtimes. It's often used at funerals but really is a prayer to say when we go to bed. Can you decorate the border and put it up by your bed?

May the Lord support us all the
day long, Till the shades
lengthen and the evening
comes, and the busy world is
hushed, and the fever of life is
over, and our work is done.

11th October, Pope St. John XXIII (1881 - 1963)

Pope John XXIII was baptised "Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli". Like all the popes before him since Pope Adrian VI who died in 1523 he was Italian. (There was to be one more Italian Pope: Pope John Paul I). Angelo came from a small village, but even as a young boy he loved to serve at the altar and went to Mass every day before school to serve. At the age of 11 he went to the Seminary of Bergamo which was a kind of grammar school to help boys discern and prepare to be priests. He was ordained in 1904 and then spent the next 54 years working in different situations, from being the bishop of Bergamo's secretary to working for the pope in different countries. He was the Apostolic nuncio to France (which means he was the pope's representative in France) until he was made a cardinal in 1953. Five years later, as an old man he was elected pope and did an amazing thing! He called "Vatican II" which was the great council that reviewed the way the Church was run and how the liturgy was celebrated. He did not live to see the close of the council, but his opening speech is very important. He said,

The greatest concern of the Council is that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously.

In a way, this is always our job too - that we guard (take care of) and tell other people the Church's teaching more effectively.

Pope John XXIII kept a diary of his prayers which is a beautiful book (for grown-ups) to read., Called "Journal of a Soul." He writes with great honesty about his successes and more often about his failings! E.g.

"Sunday 13th March 1898: So many failings this week! In school I allowed myself to say silly things. I did not concentrate in my prayers. This week when I am worried about my family instead of getting depressed, I will ask the good Jesus to help them all."

This week, try keeping a simple prayer diary. Get a notebook and at the top of each page, write the date and then on the page write (or draw a picture) a simple letter to Jesus telling Him about how you are feeling. Be honest - if you are feeling happy, then tell Jesus and if you are worried about something, tell Jesus too.

What are you going to call your Prayer diary? Here is a picture of my very old copy of Pope St. John XXIII's diary.




St Wilfrid, 12th October (634 - 709)

Wilfrid was born in Northumbria in 634. At that time England was divided into lots of separate (Anglo-Saxon) kingdoms, most of which were still pagan. Northumbria was one of the biggest kingdoms and stretched into lowland Scotland at times (depending on the strength of the warring kings) and as far south as Lincoln. Wilfrid had been educated by the monks at Lindisfarne, but he wanted more out of life so decided to travel to Rome. He set off with (St.) Benet Biscop (who would later found the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Priory where St. Bede lived). Eventually, after a long stay in Lyons they reached Rome and Wilfrid received a blessing from Pope Martin I. Back home, Wilfrid was ordained a priest by (St.) Aidan, the bishop of Lindisfarne, and was made Abbot of Ripon. However, Wilfrid's time in Europe had affected him profoundly and he realised that many of the Celtic traditions were wrong.

The two different customs were becoming a big problem; the biggest issue was the different ways of calculating when Easter should be celebrated. Whilst some Christians were celebrating Easter, others were still fasting in Lent. In 664 a Synod was held in Whitby, and Wilfrid successfully argued for adopting the Roman Tradition of calculating Easter and other liturgical rites. Shortly after this, plague swept through the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, taking with it several bishops, including Aidan. Wilfrid was chosen to be the bishop of Lindisfarne, but as there were not enough other bishops to consecrate him, Wilfrid was sent to France for consecration. He was gone so long that everyone thought he had died and so (St.) Chad was appointed instead. On his return, Wilfrid was a bit upset and so Chad was given the diocese of Mercia instead. In 678 Archbishop Theodore tried to divide Wilfrid's large, unwieldy diocese of Lindisfarne/York into two parts. Wilfrid objected and successfully appealed to Rome. The king of Northumbria became suspicious of his powerful bishop and put him in prison, but Wilfrid escaped and went to the South Saxons (Sussex) and began the work of converting the pagans there. He was eventually made the first bishop of Sussex and given land at Selsey to build an abbey.

Returning to Northumbria in 686 to take up his bishopric once more, he was again told that his diocese needed to be divided. This time he lost his appeal as the pope agreed that dioceses needed to be smaller and more manageable. He was made bishop of Hexham (the capital of Northumbria) and spent the rest of his life reorganising the monastery at Ripon according to the Benedictine rule. He died in 709 after a long (for his day) and energetic life. He was a strong character and made many enemies because he often came up against those who for their own reasons were not happy to compromise. St. Wilfrid may have been too forceful, but he lived at a time when Christianity was only just being established in what is now England, and kings were locally very powerful and were reluctant to give up anything that appeared to reduce their authority. **Many of the places that I've mentioned in this account of the life of St. Wilfrid still exist, although most have been rebuilt before becoming ruins. If you are travelling around the country, do stop and say a prayer of thanks for the courage of the early Christians who paved the way for the faith in this country. If you have any pictures, please share with me for next year's edition.**

13th October, St Edward the Confessor (1003 - 1066)

He became King of England in 1042. He was famous for his generosity to the Church and for helping the poor. Unlike many kings of his day, he listened to his people and tried to help them as much as possible. His palace was on the banks of the Thames opposite a small abbey that he had rebuilt and enlarged. This was "called West Minster" Abbey (as opposed to the "East Minster" Abbey on the site of where St. Paul's is in the city of London). He is buried in Westminster Abbey 

He died on 5 January 1066, the last of the old Anglo-Saxon line, and his death eventually led to the conquest of England by William of Normandy later the same year.

- Find a picture of St. Edward the Confessor and either print or copy it.
- What else can you find out about him?
 - *Tell someone else, may be a grandparent, or a friend, what you have learned about St. Edward the confessor.*

As St. Edward the Confessor was famous for giving away things to the poor; find some things which you can give to a charity shop.

15th October, St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

St. Teresa was a Carmelite nun who worked hard to reform her order which had grown very lax. She was a great pray-er and realised that the more we pray, the closer we become to Jesus.

She particularly encouraged people to "contemplate" Jesus in prayer.

(St. Thérèse of Lisieux was named after St. Teresa of Avila and both saints are celebrated in the same month!)

Try Contemplative prayer:

One person slowly read out a story from the Gospels, about Jesus, and everyone else shut their eyes, imagining that scene in their mind.

When the reading has finished, sit in silence for a few moments and just allow yourself to be filled with Jesus' love. Feel the warmth of His love for you. End by saying in your heart, "I love you Jesus".

This is an exercise you can do over and over again and can even do on your own.

This is a famous prayer of St. Theresa which you can learn:

*Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks
nothing;
God alone suffices.*

17th October, St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius of Antioch was a very early martyr of the Church, (he died in 107 AD) and may have known St. Peter. He was captured by the Romans and taken to Rome where to be thrown to the wild beasts because he was a Christian and refused to worship the Roman gods. On his way he wrote letters to other Christians to encourage them and to teach them more about Jesus Christ. He was a deeply holy man who spent a lot of time in prayer.

Write a letter to a friend or a family member, telling them who Jesus is.

You can say:

- Where He was born,
- What He did during His time on earth
- How He died
- That He rose from the dead on Easter Sunday
- That He ascended into heaven
- And that He is waiting there for us to join Him.

18th October, St. Luke

He is the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles. He was probably a Greek convert and not a Jew, and so his Gospel is written for Greeks and those who are not so familiar with life in Israel at the time of Jesus. Tradition also teaches us that he was a doctor and that possibly he painted the first picture of Our Lady.

Pray for all
doctors and
nurses



Paint a picture of
Mary and send it to
me to publish in the
Christmas edition.

Write out your favourite
verse from Luke's Gospel in
the banner here

22nd October, Pope Saint John Paul II (1920-2005)

He was born Karol Józef Wojtyła in 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. His studies for the priesthood were often carried out in secret and in fear of being caught by the government of Poland at that time which did not like Christians. Eventually in 1964, he became Archbishop of Kraków and on 16 October 1978 he was elected pope and took the name John Paul II. He recognised the importance of families spending "quality time" together and praying together. He had a special fondness for young people and the sick and travelled widely around the world meeting Catholics of all ages.

28th October, St. Simon and Jude, Apostles

St. Simon was known as Simon the zealot which means that he was a man of great faith.

St. Jude was also called Thaddeus and was the Apostle who asked Jesus at the Last supper why Jesus only showed Himself to His disciples and not to the world. He is not to be confused with Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. St. Jude is the patron saint of desperate and impossible causes.

Living in Christ as a family

Organise a "secret surprise" for members of the family:

- Write everyone's name on a piece of paper and put the papers in a box.
- Each person closes their eyes and takes out a name at random (if it's their own, put it back)
- Do something nice or kind in secret for that person this week. Make sure you don't give the game away!
- Younger members of the family may need help with this!

Suggestions: make someone else's bed, lay the table ready for a meal, tidy or clean up after someone else, make a nice card for someone... help carry bags, bring in the washing, put away the laundry, clean the inside of the car....

Write a prayer to St. Simon and to St. Jude:

*You can ask St. Simon to help you have more faith.
You can ask St. Jude to pray for some big issue that worries you, may be at home, at school or in the world in general.*

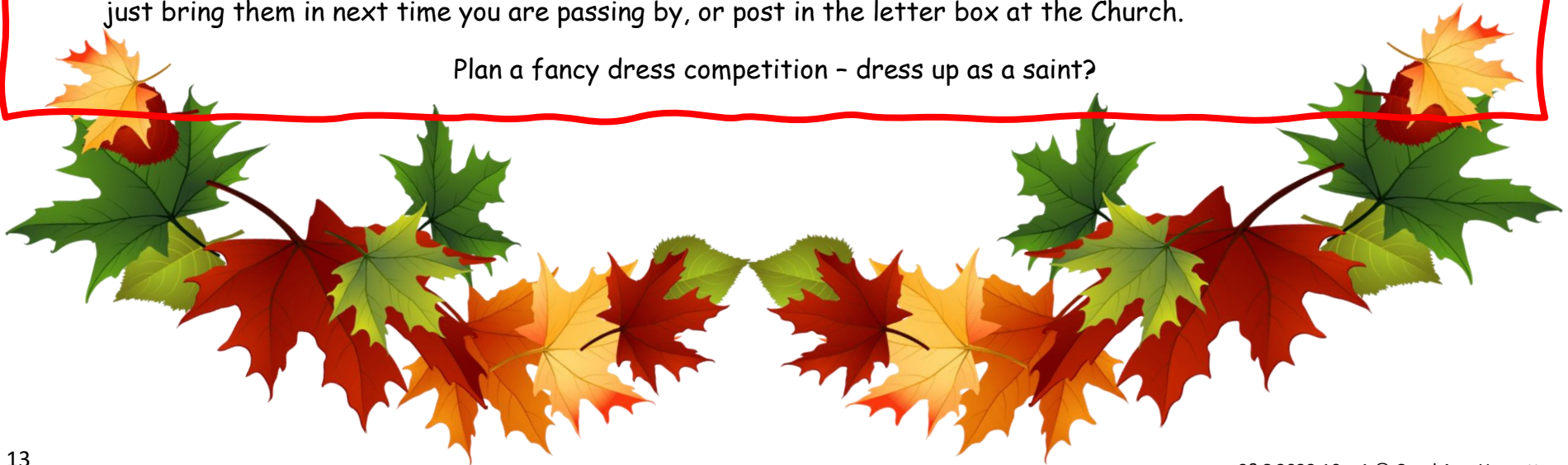


Finally, in preparation for All Saints day

Did you know that "Halloween" means "All Hallow's Eve", or "All Saints Eve"? Far better to celebrate the good people who have lived and set us wonderful examples of how we can love Jesus Christ and other people, than the nasty evil things that people do. There is enough evil in the world without celebrating it!

- As the saints come in all shapes and sizes, so do leaves! Collect as many different shapes and colours of leaves, clean them with a paper towel and make a circle with them around a candle to put on the table for your main meal on 1st November (All Saints day).
- Maybe you could do leaf rubbings or draw around them and cut out leaf shapes
- How about writing the name of different saints on each leaf?
- Find out about your own patron saint and draw a picture of him or her - we would love to put them up at Church, just bring them in next time you are passing by, or post in the letter box at the Church.

Plan a fancy dress competition - dress up as a saint?



Bring God's wonderful creation into your home this winter!

Plant some hyacinth bulbs in a pot for Christmas:

- Fill pot or container with bulb fibre or compost to within 5cm of top.
- Set the bulbs in the pot.
- They can be close together but not touching each other or the sides of the container.
- Add more compost up to the neck of the bulb.
- Press the soil down firmly to set the bulbs securely in place
- Place your pot or container in a dark, cool place. Cover loosely with a black bin bag if necessary to exclude any light.
- Check regularly and add water if they are drying out.
- When shoots are 4-5cm long, bring the pot or container into the light but keep out of strong direct light, away from draughts and away from heat sources like a radiator.
- Once the flowers are established, you can take your hyacinths into a warmer room for display. They will smell wonderful!



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