

31 Days of the Little Way: A Day of Homework and Pumpkin Decorating

Fall Saturdays could bring corn mazes or pumpkin patches or jumping in piles of leaves. But our boys both had homework projects they had to finish this weekend. Before we started, we tried to have some fun. But their projects were hanging over us, so we pulled out the instructions and started.

I tried to appreciate that we were spending time together—even though it's their work and I am just gently prodding or insisting or pleading or finally reminding that there is no more fun until this is behind us.

Daniel was completing his saint project, a report on St. Michael the Archangel. We have saint books, but for a first grade project on St. Michael, I figured the M encyclopedia would be fine. We learned there that St. Michael was the angel who handed the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.



Maybe you knew that, but it was new to me.

We made it through the homework without any tears. Then my husband walked into the room and reminded me that we had to carve and decorate the pumpkins. The boys were excited, and each of them had a vision for the final product.



Leo wanted to paint, and Daniel wanted to carve and paint. Then they realized they needed to wait for the paint from today to dry before they could complete their projects—and they accepted that happily enough.

I found myself noticing how they sat and focused on the task with excitement. They threw themselves into their work. Leo painted every crevice of his pumpkin black, not missing a spot. Daniel drew an extremely detailed face for his father to carve.



Just minutes earlier I had been wondering why their teachers would think that making a project craft-related would be more appealing to children who don't particularly get excited about crafts. The pencils had seemed heavy in their hands. There were moments they were so overcome with all the work they could barely stay in their seats to do their work, dramatically sliding out of their chairs onto the floor.

Yet here I was watching as they threw themselves into painting and drawing and designing and scooping with great interest and energy.



There was just as much work involved, and the pumpkin project took as long as the reports for school. Yet the boys happily set the pumpkins aside to return for a second round the next day.

Watching our children made me think of how I approach tasks in my day. I groan inside as I take on some of the simplest tasks that just have to be done—clearing the table or emptying the dishwasher. Yet I happily throw myself into other tasks that could easily be seen as extraneous—painting a swan gourd to look like a snake, for example, or maybe—dare I say—blogging every day during October.



I imagined God watching us and chuckling to himself as He hears me say how busy I am, although I have the time to sit and paint a gourd. But I also suspect He would believe that this type of project is what actually matters.

The assignments for school may be important, but they're not as important as sitting as a family to carve and paint pumpkins. There are opportunities to draw closer to God through all of it.

But I think the lesson for me is that I should try to bring some of that same energy and joy to the tasks I don't necessarily want to do. So tomorrow maybe I should try to view unloading the dishwasher with the same enthusiasm I brought to painting my gourd to look like a snake.

