

31 Days of the Little Way: Double the Birthday Party Fun

Our first grader had two birthday parties to attend in the same day. We could have said no to either or both, but our little guy loves spending time with his friends.

I was fairly sure we could make it happen, but I was a little anxious about the time that would be involved. So I planned our day carefully. If all went well, I could take him to one party, then go to Mass, and take him home to change into costume in time for the second party. Then we would get home with about 20 minutes to spare before I had to leave for another obligation in the evening.

That was all doable, but I couldn't figure out how I would fit in the weekly grocery run. But sometimes you just jump into the day and hope for the best.

Well, that's most days, really.

Then, as the birthday girl's mom greeted me at the first party, she said, "You're welcome to drop off and come back at the end." What's that? Leave and come back?

I hadn't even considered running an errand during the party. But as I looked at the children sitting happily and calmly at a table, coloring Halloween ornaments and waiting to decorate pumpkins and make pizza, I realized this might be my only chance.

I had two hours to run to the store, take the groceries home, and come back. If I didn't waste time, I should be able to pull that off.

So I told Daniel I was leaving, promised not to have fun without him, and headed out. And the stars were aligned perfectly. I sailed through the store. For the first time ever I found the chocolate soy milk boxes I needed on the shelves, and I almost gave the cashier a hug to thank her.



"If you ever want something and don't see it, tell customer service," she said. "We can't read your mind!" It's true. But somehow they had read my mind, and there were the cases of the coveted soy milk boxes we cannot live without, saving me another trip.

I made it home, filled the fridge, and headed back to the party to pick up Daniel.

He was happy, well-fed, and eager to tell me how much fun he had had.

Then, the mother hosting the second party also encouraged me to drop off, which meant I enjoyed a spur-of-the-moment afternoon chicken-noodle-soup-at-Panera date with my older son.

So the parties I thought were going to require four or five hours of our day ended up

giving me that time back, a beautiful gift in a busy weekend. At bedtime our little boy fell asleep, happy and exhausted, his extroverted self completely satisfied from all the time with his friends.



When I look back, I realize I did over-schedule myself. I did not leave enough time to accomplish everything I thought I might. But God offered these windows where I could choose to take the time and focus on other things—like making sure we will have food to eat this week and giving me some one-on-one time with Leo.

There's holiness to the busy days, even when you feel stretched thin. But I have to admit, as I skipped happily into the grocery store without a child or two to help me, I felt a little bit giddy. There really is nothing like the gift of time.

