

***Día de los Muertos* Tradition** **November 2**

We fix our eyes not on what is seen,
but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary,
but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

“Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.”
George Eliot

Día de los Muertos is a celebration of family members who have gone before us in death. Traditionally a three-day celebration in Mexico, culminating on November 2, this faith-filled family festival has made its way across the world. Celebrating *Día de los Muertos* allows us to process feelings about death and the afterlife in positive ways. Additionally, it reminds us that death does not end our connection to loved ones; the relationships merely change. The traditions that surround *Día de los Muertos* bring to life the hope of our faith: one day, we will see our loved ones again in the presence of God.

There are many ways to bring the tradition of *Día de los Muertos* into your own home, regardless of your heritage.

Create an altar at home to remember deceased loved ones.

- Choose a table and place a cloth over it. Purple is the traditional color, but any fall colors or a color you love will work.
- These *ofrendas* or *altarcitos* are personal. Don't think about whether you are doing it right; focus on celebrating your loved ones. Include photos, cherished belongings, food, drinks or symbols of activities they loved.
- Include any of the following: flowers (especially marigolds), candles, a crucifix, cross, rosary, statues of Jesus, Mary and other saints important to your family.
- In Mexico, many families set up their *ofrendas* in the cemetery. They decorate and clean the gravesite in their celebration.

Share a special meal.

- Like all holiday celebrations, special foods accompany *Día de los Muertos*. *Pan de Muertos* is a special sweet bread sprinkled with colored sugar and bone shapes. Beautifully decorated *Calaveras de Azúcar* are decorated and placed as

an offering for deceased loved ones. Food and drink for the living might include mole, tamales, tortilla soup, chalupas, flan, horchata or atole.

- If taking on new recipes doesn't appeal to you, celebrate with the recipes dear to your family and heritage.

Tell the stories of your loved ones: relish in memories.

- Celebrating *Día de los Muertos* is not complete without remembering the family and friends already with God. Swap stories and memories about your deceased loved one with those gathered. Celebrate the love that remains and binds us all together, and remember the eternal party is on the other side.

Rooted in 3,000-year-old indigenous celebrations of the Aztec, Toltec, and other Nahuatl speaking people, *Día de los Muertos* is a multi-day celebration of life and death.

Corresponding with the maize harvest, the Nahuatl people celebrated death as a part of life's journey and remembered their deceased ancestors with joy. Christian converts mapped these traditional celebrations onto All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day, at the beginning of November.

On November 1, the focus is on children and infants who have died. *Día de los Inocentes* or *Día de los Angelitos* is a tender, joyful celebration.

On November 2, the actual *Día de los Muertos*, families celebrate all their deceased ancestors, giving places of honor on home altars to those dearest to them.