



**St. Mary's Basilica  
Presents the 5th Annual**

## **Dia de los Muertos Festival**



**Sunday, November 4th, 2018  
11 AM to 5 PM**

**All Are Welcome!**

### **The History of Dia de los Muertos.**

In the pre-Columbian era, skulls were kept as trophies and displayed during the rituals to symbolize death and rebirth. These ancestors passed down the belief that souls exist after death, resting in Mictlan, the land of the dead; not for judgment or resurrection, but for the day each year when they could return home to visit their loved ones.

Today the holiday blends Meso-American indigenous Nahua traditions (Aztecs, Toltecs, Tlaxcaltec, Chichimec, Tecpanec as well as the non-Nahua Maya) with Roman Catholic belief, which ultimately professes the certainty in the resurrection.

After the arrival of the Spanish, this ritual of commemorating the dead was interweaved with two Spanish holidays: All Saints Day (November 1st) and All Soul's Day (November 2nd). Today, Día de los Muertos is celebrated mostly in Mexico and parts of Central & South America, most recently it has become popular in Latino communities in the U.S.

### **It's a Celebration of Life, not Death!**

Ancient Meso-Americans believed that death was part of the journey of life. Rather than death ending life, they believed that new life came from death. This cycle is often associated with the cyclical nature of agriculture, whereby crops grow from the ground where the last crop lies buried. Día de los Muertos is an opportunity to remember and celebrate the lives of departed loved ones. Like any other celebration, it is filled with music and dancing. Some popular dances include La Danza de los Viejitos—the dance of the little old men—in which boys and young men dress as old men, walk around crouched over then suddenly jump up in an energetic dance.



**WHEN:** Sunday, November 4th, 2018  
11 AM to 5 PM

**WHERE:** St. Mary's Basilica Plaza  
231 North 3rd Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

**DONATE:** Non-perishable donations  
encouraged to benefit  
St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank

**ACTIVITIES:**

- Community Procession
- Blessing of Altars
- Live Entertainment and Music
  - Andres Martinez y Ritmo Latino Band
  - Mariachi Bands
  - Folklorico Dancers
- Artisan Mercado
- Car Show with Trunk Altars
- Free Kid's Activities and Games
- Food Trucks

**ALL ARE WELCOME TO THIS FREE COMMUNITY EVENT.**



**THE OFRENDA - ALTAR**

The ofrenda (Altar) is often the most recognized symbol of Día de los Muertos. This temporary altar is a way for families to honor their loved ones and provide them what they need on their spiritual journey. Pictures of the deceased, along with items that belonged to them as well as objects that serve as a reminder of their lives, are placed in and around the Altar.

**Every ofrenda includes the four elements:**

**Water** is left in a pitcher so the spirits can quench their thirst.

**Wind** is symbolized by Papel picado, or traditional paper banners.

**Earth** is represented by food and especially bread (Pan de Muerto) because of the grains.

**Candles** signify fire (the final element). They are often left in the form of a cross to represent the cardinal directions (North, South, East & West), allowing the spirits to find their way.

*Reflections by Sylvia Hernandez-Moreno.*



**FLOWERS, BUTTERFLIES AND SKULLS ARE TYPICALLY USED AS SYMBOLS**

The cempasúchil, a type of marigold flower native to Mexico, is often placed on ofrendas and around graves. With their strong scent and vibrant color, the petals are used to make a path that leads the spirits from the cemetery to their families' homes.

Monarch butterflies play a role in Día de los Muertos because they are believed to hold the spirits of the departed. This belief stems from the fact that the first monarchs arrive in Mexico for the winter each fall on November 1st, which coincides with the festival.

Calaveritas de azucar, or sugar skulls, along with toys, are left on the altars for children who have passed. The skull is used not as a morbid symbol but rather as a whimsical reminder of the cyclical nature of life, which is why they are brightly decorated.

I sincerely hope that this answers some of your questions! Our children have been learning about altars and are creating their own shoebox altars for display during our 5th Annual Dia de los Muertos celebration here at St. Mary's on November 4, 2018.

**We at St. Mary's Basilica hope you join us for our Annual Festival beginning after the 11:00 AM mass with a procession for the blessing of the altars.**