

St. Mary's Basilica
Presents the 6th Annual

Día de los Muertos Festival

Sunday, November 3, 2019

11 AM to 5 PM

A Guide to the Explanation of the Día de los Muertos



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.



Día de los Muertos Festival
St. Mary's Basilica, November 3, 2019
Photo courtesy of Peter Jordan

History of Día de los Muertos

Celebrating the art of life, faith, and remembrance.

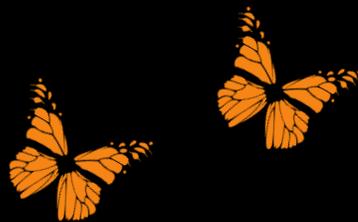
In the pre-Columbian era, skulls were kept as trophies and displayed during the rituals to symbolize death and rebirth. These ancestors passed down the belief that souls exist after death, resting in Mictlan, the land of the dead; not for judgment or resurrection, but for the day each year when they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

Today the holiday blends Meso-American indigenous Nahua traditions (Aztecs, Toltecas, 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 interwoven with two Spanish holidays: All Saints' Day (November 1st) and All Souls' 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.



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Photo courtesy of Peter Jordan



FLOWERS, BUTTERFLIES AND SKULLS ARE TYPICALLY USED AS SYMBOLS



Marigolds

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

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.



Sugar Skulls

Calaveritas de azúcar, 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.

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 with what they need on their spiritual journeys. 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.



Water

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



Wind

Wind is symbolized by papel picado, or traditional paper banners.



Earth

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



Fire

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.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Día de los Muertos Festival

Please join us and experience the sights, sounds and the celebration of the Latino culture as they celebrate the art of life, faith, and remembrance.

Sunday, November 3, 2019

11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

St. Mary's Basilica Outdoor Plaza

231 North 3rd Street

Phoenix, AZ 85004

Invited to Remember the Dead

Community altars have been prepared for the public to bring 5X7 copied photos of loved ones to place in free paper frames. They will be placed on the altars. You may also purchase a devotional candle to set on the altars and/or around the water fountain in the plaza.

