



Loving and merciful God,

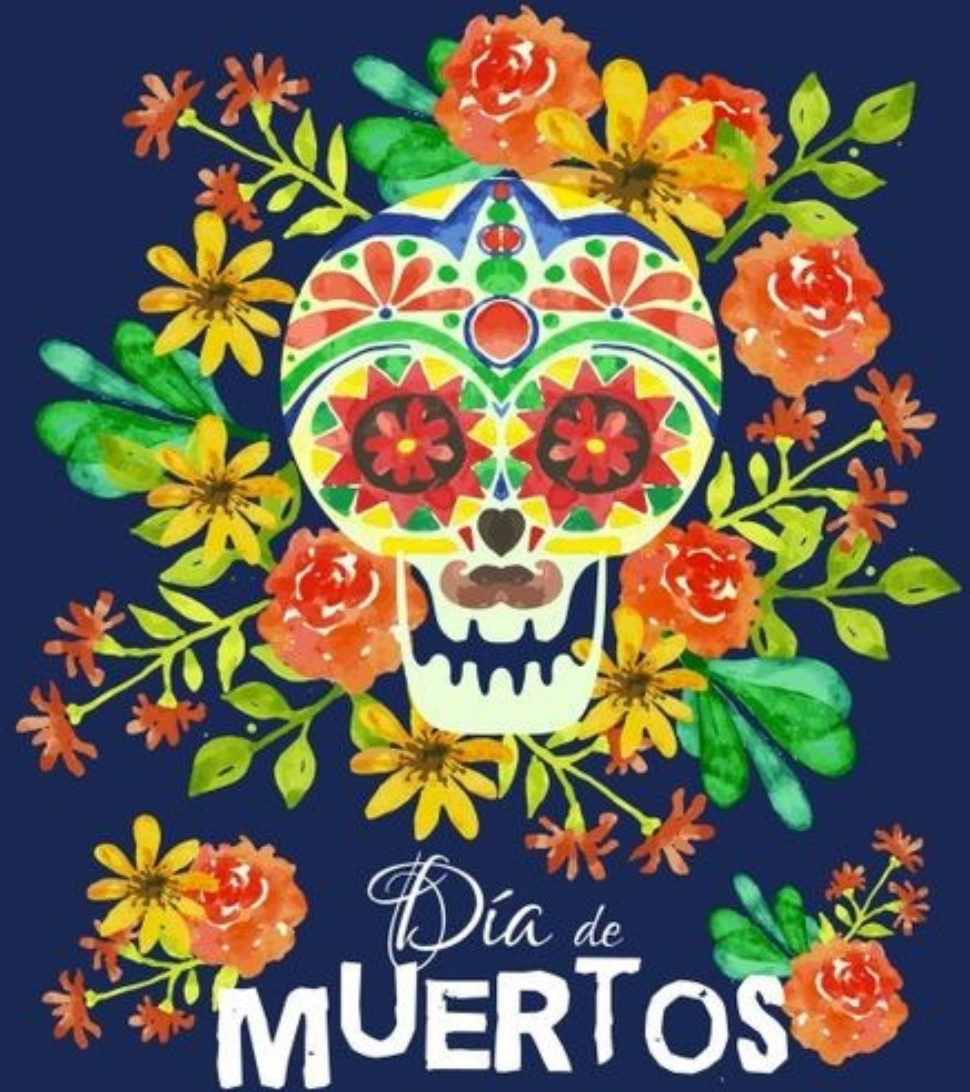
I trust into your hands my beloved \_\_\_\_\_

*(relationship and name of your loved one).*

During this life you embraced him/her with your tender love.

I pray that he/she may find eternal peace and joy with you  
and with all the angels and saints.

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Washington, D.C. p. 274



*Praying for Our Faithful Departed*

## El Dia de los Muertos: A Celebration of Eternal Life

As Catholics, we remember and honor our faithful departed on All Souls' Day on November 2. Many Hispanic cultures have maintained this ancient celebration where it is called *El Dia de los Muertos* (The Day of the Dead). This beautiful Catholic tradition with indigenous and cultural roots unites us through prayer with our loved ones who have died. *El Dia de los Muertos* is celebrated throughout the world and has been embraced in the United States as a way to commemorate All Souls' Day. Therefore, it is important to understand the true meaning of this celebration as more than just another "fiesta", but as a celebration of eternal life in Christ.

As Christians we believe that death finds its true meaning in the light of the *Paschal mystery*, the death and resurrection of Christ. Because in Baptism we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4), death is not the end of life. Through his resurrection, Christ transformed death for all of us as the way through the gates of heaven—our final destiny. The risen Christ is our hope.

Some people think that death is something of which we should be afraid. However, the Word of God tells us something completely different—that "life is changed, not taken away" at death. In the Book of Wisdom we read:

*"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with the elect." (Wisdom 3:1-3,9)*

Therefore, we need to remember that death is not something bad. As one people of God, we accompany our dead at their journey's end, and entrust them "into the Father's hands" through our prayers.

We create an altar for *el Dia de los Muertos* to mark a sacred space in our homes. In that space, we honor and remember those members in our family and friends that have gone before us, and we pray that they be united with Jesus in eternal joy.



*The Cross:* Represents the promise of Christ to the fullness of life, to eternal life.

*Photographs of the dead:* They represent our family and friends remembered with love.

*Flowers:* They represent life and the glorious state of the dead. Most notably, marigold flowers represent the glory of heaven.

*Offering:* May be composed of fruit, water, food and popular drinks that the deceased enjoyed in their earthly life, and now eat on his visit on the Day of the Dead.

*Candles:* They represent the light of faith, the light of the departed full of wisdom and their good examples that invite us to be responsible, loving and helpful.

*Bread "Pan de Muerto":* It represents Christ, the Eucharist, which strengthens us to arrive one day in paradise.

*Images of Saints:* Images of Saints serve as reminders of their role as intermediaries between the living, the dead and the "beyond".

*The skulls:* They represent a way of remembering the dead and make us think that one day we too will die as part of life. They are made of sugar and decorated with colorful flowers symbolizing the union of the dynamism of life and death.

*Fruit, food and beverages:* The altar will include fruit, food and beverages, that the deceased enjoyed in life. In addition to pleasing the departed, this element helps to recall memorable aspects of the deceased.

*Water:* Water is very important as it reflects the purity of the souls. It can reflect the regeneration circle of life and death. Usually a glass with fresh water is set in the altar so the spirits can refresh themselves and continue their journey.

*Personal objects:* These are belongings of the deceased that are set in the altar so the spirit can remember moments of his/her life. If the deceased was a child, usually toys are displayed.

*Delicately decorated tissue "Papel Picado":* This represents joy and the fragility of life.