

# Día de los muertos: the day of the dead



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The Day of the Dead, or all souls day, is the official Catholic holiday following All Saints Day. The date of the Día de los Muertos, is November 2nd. The date of this event is typically attributed to St. Odilio, an abbot of Cluny, France. St. Odilio wished to offer special prayer and singing to the Office of the Dead. The day was created in honor of those who died. During this time, there are three Requiem Masses, said to assist the soul of the deceased from Purgatory to Heaven.

The modern view of death is attributed to the Aztec, as they themselves celebrated. They believed that after death, a person would rise through nine levels of, in order to reach their destination, Mictlan, the place of the dead. It was also believed that at birth, the destination of the person would be decided, and would not take into consideration how that person lived their life. It was also believed that the fashion in which one died would determine the region of their destination one would inhabit. When the person arrived at the destination, one would either linger, awaiting movement to the next destination, or would transform. In the Aztec calendar, two months are devoted to honoring the deceased. The ninth month was dedicated to deceased infants. The tenth month was dedicated to the deceased adults. During the Spanish Inquisition of 1521, indigenous beliefs were fused with those of the Catholic church.

As a celebration adapted by many Catholic nations globally, the central idea remains the same. If a person dies after living a humane life, he or she goes to Purgatory, also known as Hell (commonly known by this term for its slang uses.) After paying for their sins, by being cleansed in the Purgatorial flames, that person goes to the afterlife. If a person did not live a humane life, he or

she would spend eternity suffering in the Purgatorial flames. It was believed however that the family of the deceased would assist the person in leaving Purgatory, by praying. During the Día de los Muertos, family of the deceased often attends services, as well as creates an alter in their home.

The typical the alter in the family's home is adorned with marigolds, the official flower of the dead, as well as a candle for each of the deceased.

Incense is often used in conjunction to these items. Also, as part of the ofrenda, or offering, food is often prepared. The dead are believed to spiritually partake from the food, and the living later consume the food. In some countries, it is also common to view the play Don Juan Tenorio.

Another common item is the sugar skull, as well as cardboard caskets with a skeleton which jumps out, and also masks, which are believed to show an expression which one cannot show normally.

During the celebration of the dead, calaveras are published. These calaveras are similar to obituaries, except for those prominent in government or society, the person is often alive. The calaveras are published often in local newspapers in a versus style. They often will describe the character of the person, and what he or she has done for the community.

One of the most popular pieces of the celebration are sugar skulls. The origin of these pieces are unknown, but it is often suggested, that they date back many centuries. The origin for the giving of the sugar skull, is believed that in ancient times, the human skull would be given as a commemorative. As this tradition grew, this became obsolete, as well as extremely unhygienic

and grizzly. The sugar skull is believed to have been an alternative to this, having, in plain form, the rough shape and color of the human skull.

In conclusion, the day of the dead brings forth a celebration in reflectance toward the dead. While the celebration is not performed in mass in non Hispanic nations, it is officially recognized by the Catholic church, which is responsible for a vast portion of religion globally. The celebration has been performed for many centuries, but is not commonly celebrated in counties from non Hispanic decent, such as most of Europe, and most of North America, with the exception of Mexico. Due to its vast importance in Hispanic nations, the celebration has carried out since 1521, and will most likely continue on past the lives of many generations to come.

### **Bibliography**

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