

Fr. Christopher's Ruminations on All Saints' Day and El Dia de los Muertos:

On All Saints' Sunday, November 5th we honor all those who, by the way they live their lives, have proclaimed the goodness of God in the world. We remember famous Saints like Francis and Mary but also unknown ones as well. Some of those we remember have shaped our lives and faith in amazing ways.

One of the ways we remember them at St. Mark's is by creating our own Dia de los Muertos ofrenda or altar in honor of the faithful men and women who have gone before us and been examples and inspiration in our lives. In doing so we want to create a kind of holy space in our simple act of honoring and acknowledging death. Lovingly, reverently, solemnly we will place photographs, items that remind us of loved ones and icons of those who have gone before us in the faith. Among the marigolds and pumpkins, the cornstalks and the sugar skulls we will nestle image of the saints, old and new to remind us of the gift of life in the midst of remembering death. We will light candles and sing songs that remind God's people that in death life is changed not ended.

Death is not easy and we don't always understand it as a gift. Some deaths are so difficult they nearly destroy the lives of the living. Some are so senseless in war and violence and disease or accident that we mourn and rage against them. There is nothing wrong with clinging tenaciously to life and resisting death in all its many forms. But the truth is that there are also deaths that are a kind of gentle and welcome good. And there are times when even difficult deaths, tragic or sudden, can become for us a kind of gift over time, a gift that opens us up to the power and depth of life. This of course is why the celebration of Dia de los Muertos with its playful but reverent honoring of death can be such a gift to us. In the robust celebration of All Saints' Day and Dia de los Muertos, there is the possibility of shaping a space for holy reflection that interrupts our busyness, and allows us to open our hearts and lives to be touched by God's Holy Spirit.

So, my hope for us in the coming Feast of All Saints is that in the mist of our worship and in our experience of the ofrenda for Dia de los Muertos, we will rediscover our own communion with all the saints and in doing so find courage and vision to live as one of God's very own saints here and now.