

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Commemoration of All Souls, Nov. 2, 2018

In November of 2017, Disney came out with an entertaining little 3-D animated movie titled Coco. Many of you may have seen the movie. The movie was about a 12-year old Mexican boy named Miguel in pursuit of his desire to be a great singer and musician. In pursuit of his goal, Miguel is accidentally transported to the Land of the Dead where he seeks the help of his deceased musician great-great grandfather to return to the land of the living. The movie was inspired by the Mexican holiday "Day of the Dead" and all the cultural traditions surrounding the holiday.

In Mexico – and among our fellow Americans of Mexican descent – All Souls Day is the culmination of a three-day observance commemorating the faithful departed – beginning with October 31st. Mexicans call All Souls Day: "El Dia de Muertos," The Day of the Dead. For Mexico, All Souls is a national holiday. It is celebrated with special foods, parades, and joyful parties. After a morning Mass, families would then go to the parish cemetery to clean and decorate the graves of relatives with flowers and remembrances.

For many of us, observing All Souls Day is marked with a more somber note, where we confront the reality of death and remember with sadness the loss of the ones we love through death. We even change from the festive Gold and white of All Saints Day to the more somber colors of black and purple to the grief we feel for those we so terribly missed.

But our Mexican brothers and sisters, I believe, really get at the heart of what we truly believe, with all their festivities on this day. They celebrate because they know in faith that their dead have not been conquered by death, and they can even help their loved ones with their prayers.

Our Mexican brothers and sisters know deep in their hearts what the Old Testament Book of Wisdom proclaims: "The Souls of the Just are in the hand of God..." Only in the view of the foolish do they seem to be dead, and their passing away an affliction and utter destruction. For they are in peace."

Paul's Letter to the Romans assures that hope does not disappoint. "For God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." "...If we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more... will we be saved by his Life."

So, taking a cue from our Mexican brothers and sisters let us dance with joy among the graves of our beloved dead – taking heart in what Jesus assures us in the gospel: "I will not reject anyone who comes to me..." "For it is the will of the one who sent me that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day."

We and our beloved dead are given to Jesus in baptism, and Jesus will not let go of us even in death. So, we can rejoice with all those we have loved and have passed through the doors of death. Jesus still having a hold of them means that we can pray for them until they grow fully into Jesus' embrace sharing in his resurrection. And, our beloved dead in turn can help us with their prayers – that we will always stay within the embrace of Jesus – that together we all may be raised to new and eternal life!