

**DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION  
IN MEXICO**

Throughout Mexico, Nov. 2 is celebrated as the "Day of the Dead," although celebrations generally begin on Nov. 1. The Day of the Dead is All Souls' Day in the liturgical calendar, yet it preserves many ancient indigenous customs. In many homes, people set up an "altar," upon which they place the photographs of loved ones who have passed away, as well as food and drink—including especially dishes and drinks that the departed loved one(s) enjoyed. They also adorn the "altar" with candles, sugar skulls, tissue paper decorations, and large orange marigolds. A special kind of bread is made as well, called "Bread of the dead."



The traditional belief is that, on that day, the deceased loved ones return to their homes to partake of the food and drink offered there. The family eats and drinks from what is placed on the "altar" and also may invite guests into their homes. Marigold petals are used to make a path from outside of the house to the "altar" so that the souls of the departed can find their way in.



Families also decorate the graves of their loved ones in the cemetery with marigolds and crosses. For most people today, the Day of the Dead is celebrated more as a cultural tradition than as a religious observance. The government declared it a national holiday in the 1960's.

**CLASS IN THEOLOGY OF  
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**

This semester, for the second time since I have been at the Lutheran Seminary and Theological Community, I was asked to teach a course on the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. As most of you no doubt already know, Bonhoeffer was among the most important Lutheran theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Germany in 1906, his faith led him to oppose Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime for over a decade. As a result of his activities during the Second World War, he was arrested, and after it was discovered that he belonged to a group that conspired to assassinate Hitler, he was executed—only one month before Germany surrendered in May of 1945.



Both the last time that I taught this course and this time, I have been surprised by the fascination that so many students have with Bonhoeffer's life and thought. This time we had 16 students from a variety of confessional traditions, including Protestant, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic, enroll in the course. At times it has been difficult for me to control the classroom discussion, since so many of the students are anxious to share their reactions to the assigned readings from Bonhoeffer's works, almost all of which have been translated into Spanish.

From what the students have shared, I have found that the aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought that most attract them are his emphasis on faith as following Christ, no matter what the cost, his view that the church is only the church when it exists for others, and the way he relates Christian faith to a concern for society.

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**E-mail: [david.brondos@elca.org](mailto:david.brondos@elca.org)**