

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT USING VIDA!

About this Proxe

La Fe leadership's brainstorm for this proxe began around the idea of Latino Spiritual Heritage. How can we engage with Latinos around a topic that is important, familiar, and/or visible to them? We looked at religious events, traditions, and sayings. Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) had a certain appeal to us. As we started digging more into the content and pressing into the idea of "Why do we honor the dead?", the value of familia became so clear. This value drives this holiday and many areas of Latino culture.

Dia de los Muertos is a celebration that takes place on the first and second days of November. The holiday has some similarity to Halloween, and it combines indigenous as well as some Christian beliefs. Residents of Mexico and Central America celebrate the lives of the dead through joyful festivities and colorful decorations. *The holiday may be more familiar to Latinos of Catholic background than those of Protestant tradition.

The Vida! Proxe is meant to stimulate conversations about Latino (in this case, Mexican/Central American) culture and spirituality, and in particular about resurrection hope.

The Vida Proxe may raise theological or historical questions about Dia de los Muertos for proxe leaders and participants. Rather than engaging this question at an apologetic level during the Proxe or in the training, we recommend taking a simple focused approach. Try to stay in the script, on the topics of mourning, life, and Jesus. Share how you connect with Jesus and his Spirit in your day-to-day life, how that's meaningful for you, and how the resurrection makes that possible. If there is a lot of curiosity around those questions, then offer an opportunity to meet up at a later time and discuss their questions.

Dia de los Muertos Quotes and References

Traditional Colors for the Day of the Dead by Caroline Baldwin

https://www.ehow.com/info_8584219_traditional-colors-day-dead.html

"The Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) celebration takes place annually on the first and second days of November. On these dates, residents of Mexico and Central America celebrate deceased loved ones' spirits as they return to the land. While it might sound morbid, this is in fact a happy celebration for participants. The lives of the dead are celebrated, and the belief is that the living will eat, dance and drink with dead relatives. The tradition, which dates back to before the 8th century, is laden with symbolism -- including the meanings of the colors used in the decorations."

What Are the Traditional Colors of the Day of the Dead? by Elba Valverde

<http://livecolorful.com/2016/10/traditional-colors-day-of-the-dead/>

"I think our favorite part of the tradition is its complexity, and the opportunity to be creative when decorating the altar or ofrenda. We also love the fact that even when Day of the Dead sounds like a sad tradition, is celebrated in a joyful and colorful way! The reason is that in most Mesoamerican cultures death did not represent the end of life, but the beginning of a new way to exist."

Dia de los Muertos: History and Meaning of the Day of the Dead by Marie McKeown

<https://holidappy.com/holidays/Dia-de-los-Muertos-History-Meaning>

"The history and meaning of *El Dia de los Muertos* (the Day of the Dead) go back to before the Spanish Conquest. The festival, celebrated across Latin America on 2nd November, includes a mixture of indigenous

Latin American and Christian beliefs. It has some similarities to Halloween, but is a unique festival with its own history and traditions, and it is celebrated in different ways in different countries.

Engaging with your own grief

The Vida Proxe can touch on some very deep issues, not only for the participants but also for people who are leading others through the experience. The Proxe touches on themes of death and loss. These can be tender and painful areas, which is why it's so important for us to invite Jesus into them.

During the proxe training, we'd recommend giving your leaders time to share stories about lost loved ones, share anything that came up during the training, and be able to pray for each other. Here are some questions to help facilitate sharing:

- Who have you lost?
- What do you miss most about that loved one?
- How did this loss affect your family/friends?
- What type of space, questions, or conversations were helpful to you during your mourning?
- How do you celebrate or honor this loved one?

Caring well for people as they share deeply

The Vida Proxe may open up opportunities for prayer ministry as people share stories of loss and grief. This may be the proxe leader's first time praying for a stranger, offering prayer ministry, or praying in a public place. We want this to be a safe space for the proxe leader and participant. We want a sincere heart, an invitation to the Holy Spirit for comfort and healing, and a comfortable experience for the proxe participant.

Some ideas to keep in mind

- Pair students up to pray for each other during the training.
- Have them practice an invitation to prayer ministry: "It sounds like you've experienced a significant loss. Would it be okay if I prayed for you briefly right now?"
- Have them pause for a moment to listen (silence) to the Holy Spirit. How might God want you to pray for this person? It is okay to keep it simple and brief.
- Try using this brief model: God, Comfort, Bless.
 - For example: "God, I believe you love Doug and know the pain he's experienced. Would you comfort him and his family as they mourn? Please bless him and his family with good friends and support in this season. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

Students can expand on this framework as they feel the Spirit lead.