I arrive in Guatemala on The Day of the Dead, November 1st. I’m curious about this holiday, so I go to the cemetery to see what’s happening. What I find is quite interesting.

The atmosphere is like a party. There are people everywhere. Families are sitting around the graves of their dead ancestors. They clean the graves and add fresh flowers. I walk through the cemetery and admire the beauty of all the colorful flowers.

There is also color in the sky, because many kids are flying kites. Some families are having a picnic next to the graves. They eat, drink, and chat together. People laugh and smile.

In the United States, cemeteries are always somber. We certainly never have festivals or parties next to graves. We don’t laugh or play music or fly kites in cemeteries either.

I find that I prefer the Guatemalan approach. I like the way they remember and celebrate those who have passed away. I like that they acknowledge death, instead of denying it the way Americans do. I like that there is life, as well as death, in their cemeteries.

Guatemalans call it “The Day of the Dead”, but it is also a day to appreciate life.