



MADAGASCAR
LEFT: Kate Griewisch
RIGHT: Flowers are everywhere to decorate the tombs in Tulear, Madagascar.

Celebrating eternal life

On All Saints Day in Madagascar, Kate Griewisch learned that a visit to the cemetery can be a happy, not sad, time – a time to celebrate the promise of eternal life.

Fety 'ny Maty ("Party of the Dead") is an important Malagasy holiday. It's a day when people clean and decorate the above-ground tombs of loved ones, says Kate, who is teaching for a year in Tulear, Madagascar, as part of the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program. A friend took her to the graveyard so she could see first-hand the tradition. "When we got there, it was completely different from the lifeless, abandoned graveyard that I had seen before," she says. "There were people and flowers everywhere!"

Her friend, whose younger brother died at 19, told Kate that, despite his loss, it was a happy day. Kate found this to be so true for everyone there.

"When I looked around, I didn't see anyone who looked upset or mournful," she says. "At least for the Christians, this was a day to celebrate the promise of eternal life after death and the hope that their lost loved ones are now in heaven. Despite the setting, I too began to feel my spirits lift and even enjoyed some food as part of the festivities. It was not at all what I expected when I arrived at the graveyard, but I am thankful for the reminder that I should celebrate life and rejoice with all the saints."



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