

The Posadas

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Christmas is a special time of the year which many parts of the world celebrate in various ways. In Mexico, for example, Catholics, representing 81% of the population, celebrate the nativity, the birthday of our Lord Jesus, through the Posadas. This essay discusses the celebrations.

In order to celebrate Christmas, Catholic people start to prepare the Posadas that take place nine days before the twenty-fourth of December, which is the Noche Buena or Holy Night. The Posadas represent how Virgin Mary and St. Joseph were looking for lodging during their trip to Bethlehem to accomplish the Census according to the scriptures. The Posadas take place in each neighbourhood and each family will schedule a night for the Posadas to be held at their home.

The first event for each Posada is to make a representation of the Nativity scene, performed by the people in the neighbourhood. One family plays the innkeepers that will receive St. Joseph and Virgin Mary. The family playing St. Joseph and Virgin Mary must be refused by two homes before they are received by the innkeepers. When the children and adults ask for lodging, they carry a little candle in their hands. As well, four people are chosen to carry two small statues of St. Joseph and Virgin Mary.

The children and adults will visit three different houses around the neighbourhood, and only the third house around the neighbourhood will allow them in. The family that will host the Posada are the people who will allow their entire neighbourhood into their house. After all the children and adults sing a chant and get into the house, everybody sits together and kneels around the Nativity scene to pray with the rosary. The rosary is a traditional Catholic prayer consisting of fifty Hail Mary's, five Our Fathers, five glories, and a special song dedicated to Virgin Mary.

The second activity of the Posadas is when the adults gather the children together to break the Piñata. A long time ago, the traditional piñata was made of pottery, but it was dangerous for children. Therefore, nowadays piñatas are made of cardboard, which also makes it more difficult to break. The figures of the piñata are varied, but the most common are cartoon animals and stars. For example, stars with seven peaks symbolize good luck. The piñata is filled with peanuts in the shell, oranges, tangerines, sugarcanes, and occasionally, wrapped hard candy. When the children try to break the piñata, they have to pass one at a time to hit the piñata. Each child in turn tries to break the piñata with a stick while being blindfolded to make the breaking more exciting and difficult. Finally, when the piñata is broken, the children pick up plentiful seasonal fruits and candies.

The last activity of the Posadas is when everybody gets together to eat traditional dishes served just at Christmas time. These traditional dishes are tamales and ponche. Tamales are made of cornbread filled with meats in a sauce; the sauce could be red or green and should have a spicy taste. Then the tamales are wrapped in corn husks and steamed. The other type of traditional dish is Ponche, which is a beverage made with seasonal fruits, such as mandarins, tejocotes, guavas, apples, and raisins. Ponche is a hot beverage in which all these seasonal fruits are mixed in a big pottery pot.

In conclusion, Christmas for Catholic Mexicans is based on the traditions and customs followed by the Catholic religion. One of the most traditional celebrations is the Posadas because they are the only time at which the neighbourhood can get together to enjoy traditional Christmas food, but it is also a time to reflect on how important the birthday of our lord Jesus is and what great deeds Jesus did for us in his life.