

How to Celebrate a Mexican Posada:
A Packet for Lay Leaders, Musicians, and Clergy



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The Tradition

Las Posadas (Spanish for “the inns”) is an Advent celebration revolving around the concept of hospitality. In Mexico and some parts of Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, it is traditional to hold Posadas during the nine days before Christmas, beginning December 16 and ending December 24. The Posadas symbolize Mary and Joseph’s long, frustrating search for a place to stay where Jesus could be born. The tradition re-enacts--with a twist, and a happy ending--the story told in Luke 2:1-7. We learn from the Posadas that by welcoming the poor and the needy, we are welcoming Jesus in our midst. (See Matthew 25:40).

Typically, different families in a neighborhood will take turns scheduling a night for the Posada to be held at their home, starting on the 16th of December and finishing on the 24th. Every home has a nativity scene, and the family hosting the Posada act as the innkeepers. The neighborhood children and adults are the pilgrims (“Peregrinos”), who go house to house, singing a traditional song about Mary and Joseph searching for lodging. At one house after the other, they are turned away (also in song), until the weary travelers reach the designated site for the party, where Mary and Joseph are finally recognized and allowed to enter.

Adapting the Posada to a Church Setting

In the U.S., a growing number of congregations, both Latino and Anglo, are adapting the tradition of the Posadas into an Advent-time event held in the church, rather than in homes, or into a one-time procession which starts at a nearby home (or homes) and concludes at the church. The whole congregation, as well as neighbors and friends, are invited to participate.

The participants are divided into two groups, with one half (the pilgrims) gathering outside the church or social hall while the other half (the innkeepers) wait inside. The song can be sung in English or, even better, in both English and Spanish. The song ends with the pilgrims entering the “inn” to a joyous welcome.

Suggested Program

1. The program could start in the sanctuary or in the social hall with a song and a prayer, an acclamation, or a scripture.
2. Advent hymns or carols, preferably bilingual, could be part of the program.
3. A short presentation on how Christmas is celebrated in Latin America, or a short presentation by the leaders of a local Latino organization, may be appropriate.
4. Prepare the congregation by having a native Spanish speaker, or someone fluent in the language, give a five-minute instruction on how to pronounce the Spanish vowels. Tell everyone to relax, to have a good time, and not to worry about mispronouncing words.
5. Divide the congregation into two groups, to sing the Posadas song and perform the re-enactment as explained above.
6. Finally, the congregation can share a communal meal, which could include breaking a piñata.

Latino-Anglo Engagement

If your congregation has Latino ministries, here are some ways that the Posadas celebration can be used to promote Latino-Anglo engagement:

- ☐ Approach your Latino friends and neighbors and explain to them that your church is thinking of holding a Posada. Let them know that this is an adaptation for a church setting. Ask them for their advice and ask them to take part in the program: helping with the music, giving a short presentation on Hispanic Christmas traditions, teaching how to pronounce the words of the Posadas song, bringing traditional Christmas food, etc.
- ☐ Invite Spanish-speaking members of your convocation or your diocese to give you advice and to help with the program. Invite your Latino friends and neighbors to participate.
- ☐ Invite a local community leader who serves or advocates for Latinos to take a few minutes to explain what their organization does.

A Note for Musicians

The Posadas song is traditional, and the music and lyrics vary slightly from region to region. Posada processions typically use guitars and other portable instruments. The song is a dialogue between “Fuera” (Outside, sung by the Pilgrims) and “Dentro” (Inside, sung by the Innkeepers). The final section, “Entren, Santos Peregrinos” (“Enter, Enter, Holy Pilgrims”) can be sung by everyone as the pilgrims are finally invited in.

Additional Resources

Wikipedia article www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las_Posadas

Article at MexConnect www.mexconnect.com/articles/2816-las-posadas

The Posadas Song on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUyP51TB52I

Las Posadas

Peregrinos (Pilgrims)

En nombre del cielo
os pido posada,
pues no puede_andar
ya mi_esposa_amada.

Pray give us lodging, dear sir, in the name of heav'n.
All day since morning to travel we've giv'n.
Mary, my wife, is expecting a child.
She must have shelter tonight. Let us in, let us in!

Posaderos (Innkeepers)

Aquí no_es mesón,
sigan adelante.
Yo no puedo_abrir,
no sea_algún tunante.

You cannot stop here, I won't make my house an inn.
I do not trust you, your story is thin.
You two might rob me and then run away.
Find somewhere else you can stay. Go away, go away!

Peregrinos (Pilgrims)

Venimos rendidos
desde Nazaret.
Yo soy carpintero
de nombre José.

Please show us pity, your heart cannot be so hard.
Look at poor Mary, so worn and so tired.
We are most poor, but I'll pay what I can.
God will reward you, good man. Let us in, let us in!

Posaderos (Innkeepers)

No me_importa_el nombre,
déjennos dormir,
pues que yo les digo
que no_hemos de_abrir.

You try my patience. I'm tired and must get some rest.
I've told you nicely, but still you insist.
If you don't go and stop bothering me,
I'll fix you, I guarantee. Go away, go away!

Peregrinos (Pilgrims)

Mi_esposa_es María;
es reina del cielo,
y madre va_a ser
del Divino Verbo.

Sir, I must tell you my wife is the queen of heav'n,
chosen by God to deliver his Son.
Jesus is coming to earth on this eve.
(Oh heaven, make him believe!) Let us in, let us in!

Posaderos (Innkeepers)

¿Eres tú José?
¿Tu_esposa_es María?
Entren peregrinos,
no los conocía.

Joseph, dear Joseph, oh how could I be so blind?
Not to know you and the virgin so fine!
Enter, blest pilgrims, my house is your own.
Praise be to God on his throne! Please come in, please come in!

Todos (All)

Entren santos peregrinos, peregrinos,
reciban este rincón.
Aunque_es pobre la morada,
os la doy de corazón.

Enter, enter, holy pilgrims, holy pilgrims.
Welcome to my humble home.
Though 'tis little I can offer,
all I have please call your own.

Para Pedir Posadas

—Fuera—

INTRO:



1. En — nom - bre — del cie - lo
2. Ve - ni - mos — ren - di - dos
3. Mi — es - po - sa es Ma - rí - a,



1. Os — pi - do — po - sa - da.
2. Des - de Na - za - ret. —
3. Es — la Rei - na del Cie - lo,



1. Pues — no pue - de an - dar —
2. Yo — soy car - pin - te - ro
3. Y — ma - dre va a ser —



1. Ya mi es - po - sa a - ma - da.
2. De — nom - bre — Jo - sé.
3. Del — Di - vi - no Ver - bo.

-Dentro-

Re D La7 A7

1. A - quí no es me - són.
2. No me im - por - ta el nom - bre,
3. ¿E - res tú Jo - sé?

Re D

1. Si - gan a - de - lan - te.
2. Dé - jen - me dor - mir,
3. ¿Tu es - po - sa es Ma - rí - a?

Re7 D7 Sol G

1. Pues no pue - do a - brir
2. Pues que yo les di - go
3. En - tren pe - re - gri - nos,

Sol G Re D La7 A7 Re D La7 A7 Re D

1. No se - a al - gún tu - nan te.
2. Que no he - mos de a - brir.
3. No los co - no - cí - a.

—Entren, Santos Peregrinos—

Re D Sol G Re D Sol G Re D La7 A7

En-tren, San-tos Pe-re-gri-nos, Pe-re-gri-nos, Re-ci-ban es-te rin -

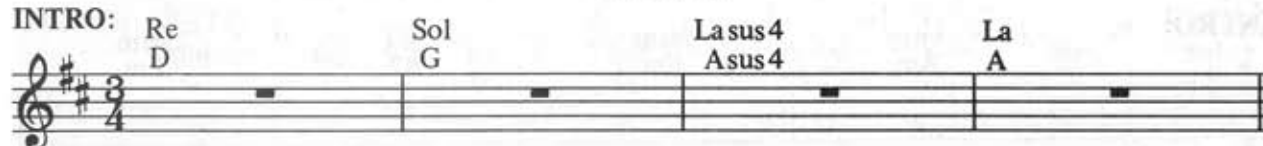
Re D Sol G Re D La7 A7 Re D

cón, Aunque es po-bre la mo-ra-da, os la doy de co-ra-zón.

The Posadas Song

--Outside--

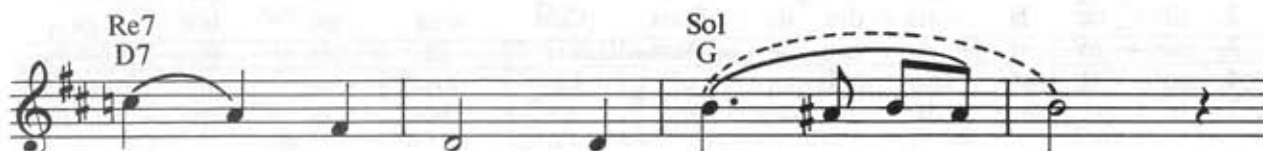
INTRO:



1. Pray give us lodg - ing, dear sir, in the name of heav'n
2. Please show us pi - ty, your heart cannot be so hard.
3. Sir, I must tell you my wife is the queen of heav'n,



1. All day since morn - ing to trav - el we've giv'n.
2. Look at poor Ma - ry, so worn and so tired.
3. cho - sen by God to del - i - ver his Son.



1. Ma - ry, my wife, is ex - pect - ing a child.
2. We are most poor, but I'll pay what I can.
3. Je - sus is coming to earth on this eve.



1. She must have shel-ter to - night. Let us in, let us in!
2. God will re - ward you, good man. Let us in, let us in!
3. (Oh hea - ven, make him be - lieve!) Let us in, let us in!

--Inside--



1. You can - not stop here, I won't make my house an inn.
2. You try my pa - tience. I'm tired and must get some rest.
3. Jo - seph, dear Jos - eph, oh how could I be so blind?



1. I do not trust you, your sto ry is thin.
2. I've told you nice - ly, but still you in - sist.
3. Not to know you and the vir - gin so fine!

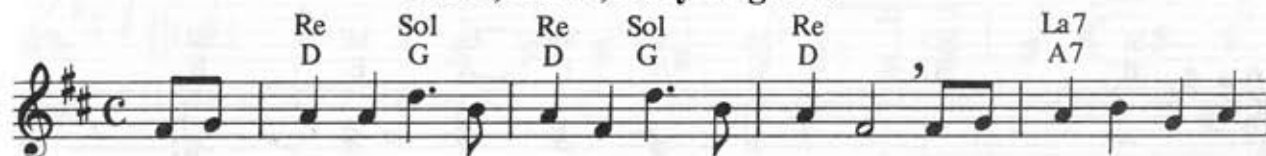


1. You two might rob me and then run a - way.
2. If you don't go and stop bo - thering me,
3. En - ter, blest pilgrims, my house is your own.



1. Find somewhere else you can stay. Go a - way, go a - way!
2. I'll fix you, I gua - ran - tee. Go a - way, go a - way!
3. Praise be to God on his throne! Please come in, please come in!

-- Enter, Enter, Holy Pilgrims --



En - ter, en - ter, ho - ly pilgrims, ho - ly pilgrims. Welcome to my humble



home. Though 'tis lit - tle I can of - fer, all I have please call your own.