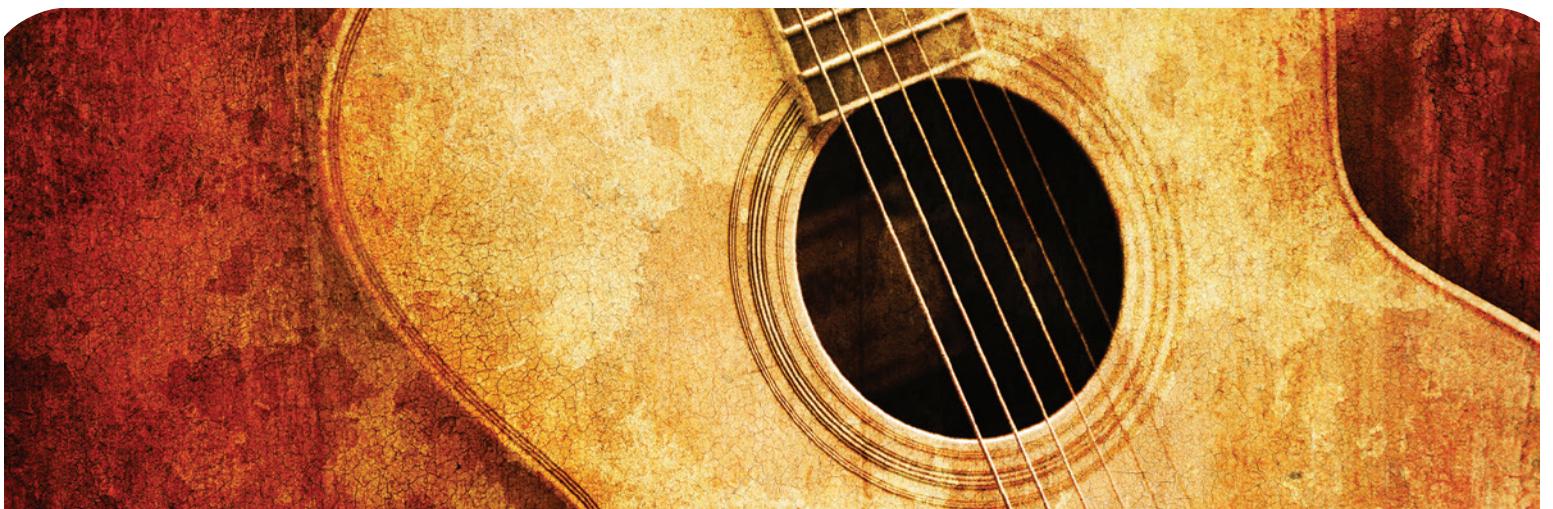




Room in the Inn: Ideas for Celebrating

# posadas



# Room in the Inn: Ideas for Celebrating Posadas

Hugo Olaiz and Yuri Rodríguez

## **The Tradition**

The Posadas (Spanish for inn, lodging, or shelter) are an Advent candlelight procession and celebration. 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 are a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's long, frustrating search for a place where Jesus could be born. The tradition re-enacts the story told in Luke 2:1-7—but with a twist: a happy ending with the “innkeeper” welcoming Mary and Joseph into the home. We learn from the Posadas that by welcoming the poor and the needy, we are welcoming Jesus into our midst. (See Matthew 25:40.)

In Mexico and other countries, neighbors take turns hosting Posadas. Children, adults, and musicians play the parts of Mary and Joseph or carry statues of Mary and Joseph. Together, they go house to house as Christian pilgrims searching for lodging. At one house after another, they ask for lodging, in song, and are turned away, also in song. When the pilgrims reach the final stop of the procession, an additional verse is sung, in which Mary and Joseph are recognized by the innkeepers and allowed to enter the home. What follows is a fiesta celebrating the innkeepers' hospitality—and the hospitality of the fiesta's host—often accompanied by a piñata for the children. As often happens in popular religiosity, the tradition and the song vary from region to region. There is no wrong way to celebrate Posadas so long as the experience helps us focus on Jesus.

## **Adapting the Posadas 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 a one-night event (instead of the traditional nine nights) held during the season of Advent. The event often starts in a home or in the church's parking lot and ends in the church. The whole congregation, as well as neighbors and friends, are invited to participate. Congregations with more experience may repeat the event, visiting different homes on different nights. If you're planning to celebrate Posadas on multiple evenings between December 16 to 24, consider using *Novena de Navidad: Unos días de reflexión durante el Adviento* (available only in Spanish), which includes simple liturgical meditations around themes such as obedience, faithfulness, and humility. (See **Additional Resources**.)

Arriving at the door of a home or church, the group sings the part of the pilgrims. Another group of people, from the inside, responds by singing the part of the innkeepers. Before reaching the final stop, the pilgrims end their singing with verse 4 and are rejected at one or more homes. At the final stop, verse 5 and the refrain (coda) are also sung, and the pilgrims enter the “inn” to a joyous welcome.

## **Walking the Walk**

Some churches have simplified Posadas to the point that there is only a token procession: The pilgrims move directly from the church parking lot to the church door, where they sing the entire Posadas song and are welcomed inside. Anthony Guillén, missionary for Latino/Hispanic ministries in The Episcopal Church, strongly discourages this practice and advises groups to experience the incarnational aspect of the Posadas. “Mary and Joseph are rejected, homeless people,” Guillén says. “The whole point of the Posadas is to remind us what it is like to experience cold, fatigue, and rejection; so it is crucial for the pilgrims to walk for a long time in the cold.”

Guillén encourages organizers to stop at a minimum of two or three houses where the pilgrims will be rejected before heading to their final destination. The event could be used to raise awareness about migration or homelessness or as a fundraiser to support people who are homeless or experiencing other needs.

## **Preparations**

**Face the music:** Recruit people who can play portable instruments; guitars and accordions are good choices, but the spirit of the procession is more important than the quality of the music. If you have more than one musician, you might have at least one play from inside “the inn.” Make copies of the lyrics or music. The Posadas song is traditional, and the music and lyrics may vary from region to region. If you do not have a musician, download the song from the website, [www.venadelante.org/posadas](http://www.venadelante.org/posadas), and play it from a phone or other device.

**Scope out the place:** Once you have chosen the route for the procession, walk it in order to time the trip and to identify any hazards, such as uneven sidewalks, icy spots, or poorly marked pedestrian crossings. If your Posadas are to be held at dusk or later, make sure to have flashlights. Traditionally the procession utilizes candles, but because of the danger of walking with an open flame, we recommend using flashlights or other artificial lights. It is fairly inexpensive to purchase battery-operated candles, which could at least add a “candlelight” feel to the event.

**Give ample information ahead of time:** Explain to the congregation the plan: departure time and place, things they may need to bring (such as warm clothing and flashlights), and parking and carpooling instructions. Tell the congregation that this is an especially good occasion to invite neighbors and friends. Use your online presence to promote this event. You may consider inviting congregations in partnership with your local community leaders. Prepare posters and go door to door, meeting and inviting the neighbors to participate with you. You might also ask some neighbors for permission to use their homes as stops on the way to church. (See **Engaging the Neighborhood**.)

## **The Procession**

**Gathering:** Start by meeting at someone's home, preferably outside, or in the church's parking lot. You might start with a simple Advent song and a prayer or acclamation. A short prayer for travelers appears on page 831 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. This prayer would also be appropriate:

**Emmanuel—God with us:** We remember tonight the journey that your mother took as she and Joseph searched for lodging—a warm, safe place where she could give birth to you. We know that in our world, this very night, there are men, women, and children who are making exhausting or dangerous journeys; men, women, and children who are searching for lodging. We pray that hospitable doors will be opened to them. In Christ's name. *Amen.*

**Reading:** A short Bible reading, (especially Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 25:34-40, or Hebrews 13:2) may be appropriate.

**Invitation:** Provide instructions and pass out printed materials (such as the itinerary and the lyrics). Invite those gathered to experience the walk as a pilgrimage. Encourage participants to reflect on the hardships that Joseph and Mary likely experienced during their journey to Bethlehem—the hardships of migrants who walk long distances to escape violence or poverty or the hardships of those who are shut out, (such as the homeless).

**Organization:** Whatever you choose, make sure that the procession is safe and that you follow local laws. Unless you have a police escort, avoid walking in the street. The procession could be organized in different ways. It could be led by acolytes carrying a cross and candles, with people carrying statues or icons of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph at the end of the procession. Some processions are headed by children or adults dressed as Joseph and Mary. In more elaborate Posadas, Mary rides a donkey.

**Singing:** While some favor a silent procession, others prefer to sing simple songs a cappella appropriate for the occasion.

**Asking for lodging:** The pilgrims ask for lodging by singing verses 1-4 of the Posadas song. The song can be sung in English, in Spanish, or in both languages. To create a stronger choir of innkeepers, some of the pilgrims may be asked to join the innkeepers inside (perhaps by arriving a few minutes earlier or using a back door). If the group is very small and the pilgrims and innkeepers cannot hear one another, the door may be left ajar. After being rejected, the pilgrims process to the next stop. The musicians process with the pilgrims.

**Entering the inn:** At the final stop (typically the church or a home large enough to accommodate your crowd), pilgrims and innkeepers sing the whole Posadas song, including verse 5 and the refrain (coda). As the refrain starts, the doors to “the inn” are opened and the pilgrims walk in.

## **Ideas for the Church Program**

Once the Pilgrims enter “the inn,” you have a number of options. If the pilgrims have walked a long way, you may choose to move directly to having refreshments. Otherwise, you could have a short program with a presentation, a discussion, or a liturgical component. Whatever you choose to do, it is traditional to eat together and to break a piñata. (See **Engaging the Children**.)

**Presentation or Discussion:** Before or during refreshments, there could be a component that connects the Posadas to one of these issues:

- Homelessness in our community—and what we can do about it.
- The biblical concept of hospitality. (Consider using Matthew 25:34-40 or Hebrews 13:2 as readings.)
- Migration today—in our community, in our country, or in the world.
- The Latino community in your community.
- Latino/Anglo relations in your community.

This conversation could be facilitated by a single person or by group discussion.

Alternatively, the program could include one of the following:

- A short presentation on how Christmas is celebrated in different parts of Latin America.
- A short presentation by the leaders of a local Latino organization.
- A personal story of an immigrant seeking hospitality.

**Liturgical component:** Before or after refreshments, the program could include a song, a hymn, a reading, a short sermon, and/or a prayer. A reading from the Bible could retell the Christmas story. Advent hymns or carols, preferably sung bilingually, could be part of the program. Texts from the order for Evening Prayer or for Compline from *The Book of Common Prayer*, referring to darkness and light, may be particularly appropriate.

## **Latino-Anglo Engagement**

Here are some ways that Posadas can be used to promote Latino-Anglo engagement:

- Approach your Latino friends and neighbors and explain to them that your church is thinking of celebrating a Posada. Ask for their advice and invite them to take part in the program, such as helping with the music, giving a short presentation on Latino Christmas traditions, teaching Anglo participants how to pronounce the words of the Posadas song, or bringing traditional foods.
- Invite Spanish-speaking members of your congregation or 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.
- Hold a community cooking class to learn about some of the traditional Posadas foods: *atole*, *tamales*, *buñuelos*, *ponche de fruta*, or *champurrado*.

## **Engaging the Neighborhood**

Whether your congregation is Latino, Anglo, or both, Posadas are a great way to meet new people. Consider asking the folks in your neighborhood where you will be conducting your Posadas, whether or not they are Episcopalians, to allow the pilgrims to knock at their door and “be rejected” with the Posadas song. Here are some ideas about how to do that:

1. Knock on a neighbor's door and introduce yourself.
2. Briefly explain what the Posadas are. Explain that your congregation will make a Posadas procession through the neighborhood on a specific date.
3. Ask the neighbor if they would be willing to have a musician or a few church members stand inside their door to “reject” Joseph and Mary on their way to “the inn.”
4. However they respond, thank them and invite them to join the event.
5. Place Posadas announcements around the neighborhood.

## **Engaging Children**

Children are an important part of Posadas. In some places, children dress up as Joseph and Mary, pilgrims, angels, or shepherds for the procession. In most parts of Latin America, children break a piñata and receive little gift bags known as *colaciones* or *aguinaldos*.

Here are some ideas for engaging children in the preparations for the Posadas:

- Have your Christian formation teachers explain the Posadas tradition to the children.
- Have the children learn and practice the Posadas song.
- Have the children make and fill the piñata.

In some regions, piñatas have the shape of a seven-cone star. Children are sometimes taught that the piñata and its cones represent sin, with garish colors and ribbons that tempt the soul. The blindfold that is placed on the children represents living or walking by faith alone. The breaking of the piñata is said to be a symbol of triumphing over temptation. The falling candy illustrates the grace of God.

For instructions on how to build a traditional five-cone piñata, watch this video clip: <http://bit.ly/1LIBBHS>. At least six hours must pass between each application of three or four layers of paper, so making a piñata will require several sessions.

## **A Final Note: Embracing Diversity**

Your Posadas will be unique. You may encounter musicians who will insist that their version of the Posadas song is the only authentic one, or you may find that pilgrims start singing “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” as they process. Don't forget that Posadas have always been a diverse tradition. Hospitality is at the heart of Posadas and hospitality includes welcoming forms of participation that diverge from your original plan.

## Additional Resources

### Websites:

- The Forward Movement page on the Posadas: [www.VenAdelante.org/posadas](http://www.VenAdelante.org/posadas).
- Wikipedia article: <http://bit.ly/1LOkFQo>.
- Article at MexConnect: <http://bit.ly/1NVd2di>.

### Facebook:

- A page to share pictures and videos of your Posadas: <https://www.facebook.com/SharingPosadas>.

### YouTube Clips:

- The Posadas song in English, with guitar accompaniment, is available at: <http://bit.ly/1PPbdhv>.
- The Posadas Ecuatorianas on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/1GnOPt9>. Note: These Posadas, popular in Ecuador, have different music and lyrics.
- How to make a traditional five-cone piñata: <http://bit.ly/1LIBBHS>.

### Publications:

de la Torre, William. *Novena de Navidad: Unos días de reflexión durante el Adviento preparándonos para el nacimiento de Jesús en nuestros corazones*. 2008. Available in Spanish at this link: [www.VenAdelante.org/nov](http://www.VenAdelante.org/nov).

García, Francisco J. *Cheer Our Spirits, Make Safe the Way: Meditations for Advent and Christmas*. Forward Movement, 2012. [www.VenAdelante.org/cheer](http://www.VenAdelante.org/cheer).

## About Forward Movement

Forward Movement is committed to inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists. Our mission is to support you in your spiritual journey, to help you grow as a follower of Jesus Christ. Publishing books, daily reflections, studies for small groups, and online resources is an important way that we live out this ministry. More than a half million people read our daily devotions through *Forward Day by Day*, which is also available in Spanish (*Adelante día a día*) and Braille, online, as a podcast, and as an app for your smartphones or tablets.

We actively seek partners across the Church and look for ways to provide resources that inspire and challenge. A ministry of The Episcopal Church for eighty years, Forward Movement is a nonprofit organization funded by sales of resources and gifts from generous donors.

To learn more about Forward Movement and our resources, please visit us at [www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org) (or [www.VenAdelante.org](http://www.VenAdelante.org)). We are delighted to be doing this work and invite your prayers and support.



[www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org)

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# Las Posadas

English translation by John-Charles Duffy

## Pilgrims:

1. In the name of heaven,  
can you give us lodging?  
My dear wife's exhausted  
after hours of walking.

## Innkeepers:

This is not an inn.  
I don't take in strangers.  
You might be a robber.  
I can't risk that danger.

## Pilgrims:

2. Do not be so heartless!  
Help us, we implore you.  
God, who sees from heaven,  
surely will reward you.

## Innkeepers:

I cannot assist you.  
Find someone who can.  
Leave now, or I warn you,  
you will wish you had.

## Pilgrims:

3. We have come from Nazareth,  
walking all the way.  
I am a poor woodworker.  
Joseph is my name.

## Innkeepers:

Knowing what your name is  
does not change my answer.  
Go, and let me sleep.  
Stop this useless banter.

## Pilgrims:

4. Please, sir, all we ask  
is one night of lodging  
for the queen of heaven.  
Can you offer nothing?

## Innkeepers:

I've heard many stories;  
this beats every one.  
Since when does a queen  
walk at night alone?

## Pilgrims:

5. Truly, my wife Mary  
is a queen most bless'd.  
She will be the mother  
of the Word made flesh.

## Innkeepers:

Is that you, Saint Joseph?  
And the Virgin, too?  
I would have opened sooner  
if I'd recognized you.

## All: (Refrain/Coda)

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

## All: (Refrain/Coda)

Mary, Joseph, and our Savior, and our  
Savior, what a joy to have you here!  
We are honored to receive you,  
to receive you.  
May you stay through all the year!

# Las Posadas

The song alternates, one verse "OUTSIDE," followed by the corresponding verse "INSIDE."  
At the end, everyone sings the CODA as all enter the house. \

English translation by John-Charles Duffy  
Mexican traditional music, arranged  
by Yuriria Rodríguez

Ranchero Waltz ♩ = 120

**OUTSIDE**

1. In the name of heav - - en, can you give us  
2. Do not be so heart - - less! Help us, we im -  
3. We have come from Naz - a - reth, walk - ing all the  
4. Please, sir, all we ask is one night of  
5. Tru - ly, my wife Ma - - ry is a queen most

7 C C<sup>7</sup> F

lodg - - ing? My dear wife's ex - haust - ed  
plore you. God, who sees from heav - en,  
way I am a poor wood-work - er.  
lodg - - ing for the queen of heav - en.  
bless'd She will be the moth - er

13 G<sup>7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> C

af - ter hours of walk - - - - ing.  
sure - ly will re - ward you.  
Jo - seph is my name.  
Can you of - fer no - - - - thing?  
of the Word made flesh.

INSIDE

19 C G7

1. This is not an inn. I don't take in  
 2. I can - not as - sist you. Find some - one who  
 3. Know - ing what your name is does not change my  
 4. I've heard ma - ny sto - - ries; this beats ev - ery  
 5. Is that you, Saint Jo - - seph? And the Vir - gin

25 C C7 F

stran - - gers. You might be a rob - - ber.  
 can. Leave now, or I warn you,  
 an - - swer. Go, and let me sleep.  
 one. Since when does a queen  
 too? I would have o - pened soon - - er

31 G7 C G7 C al  $\text{\$}$

I can't risk that dan - - - - ger. (Last time to Coda)  
 you will wish you had.  
 Stop this use - less ban - - - - ter.  
 walk at night a - lone?  
 if I'd re - cog - nized you.

$\text{\textcircled{4}}=80$

CODA C F C F C G C

En - ter, en - ter, ho-ly pilgrims, ho-ly pilgrims. Welcome to my humble home. Though it's  
 Ma - ry, Joseph, and our Sa-rior, and our Sa-rior, what a joy to have you here! We are

42 C F C F C G C

lit - tle I can of - fer, I can of - fer, all I have, please call your own.  
 hon - ored to re - ceive you, to re - ceive you. May you stay through all the year!

# Las Posadas

English translation by John-Charles Duffy

## Peregrinos:

1. En el nombre del cielo  
os pido posada,  
pues no puede andar  
mi esposa amada.

## Posaderos:

Aquí no es mesón,  
sigan adelante,  
yo no debo abrir,  
no sea algún tunante.

## Peregrinos:

2. No seas inhumano,  
tennos caridad,  
que el Dios de los cielos  
te lo premiará.

## Posaderos:

Ya se pueden ir  
y no molestar  
porque si me enfado,  
os voy a apalear.

## Peregrinos:

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

## Posaderos:

No me importa el nombre,  
déjenme dormir  
pues que ya les digo  
que no hemos de abrir.

## Peregrinos:

4. Posada te pide,  
amado casero,  
por solo una noche,  
la Reina del cielo.

## Posaderos:

Pues, si es una reina  
quien lo solicita,  
¿cómo es que de noche  
anda tan solita?

## Peregrinos:

5. Mi esposa es María,  
es Reina del cielo,  
y madre va a ser  
del divino Verbo.

## Posaderos:

¿Eres tú, José?  
¿Tu esposa es María?  
Entren, peregrinos,  
no los conocía.

## Todos: (Coda/Estríbillo)

Entren, santos peregrinos, peregrinos,  
reciban este rincón,  
que aunque es pobre la morada, la  
morada, os la doy de corazón.

## Todos: (Coda/Estríbillo)

Cantemos con alegría, alegría,  
todos al considerar,  
que Jesús, José y María, y María,  
nos vinieron hoy a honrar.

# Las Posadas

El canto se hace alternando una estrofa de "AFUERA" con la correspondiente estrofa de "ADENTRO".  
La "CODA" la cantan todos juntos al entrar a la casa.

Vals Ranchero ♩ = 120

Letra y música: Tradicional de México  
Edición: Yuriria Rodríguez

**AFUERA**

1. En\_\_\_ el nom - bre del cie - lo os\_\_\_ pi - do\_\_\_ po -  
 2. No\_\_\_ seas in - hu - ma - no, ten - nos ca - ri -  
 3. Ve - ni - mos\_\_\_ ren - di - dos des - de Na - za -  
 4. Po - sa - da\_\_\_ te pi - de, a - ma - do\_\_\_ ca -  
 5. Mi\_\_\_ es - po - sa es Ma - rí - a, es\_\_\_ Rei - na del

7 C C<sup>7</sup> F

sa - da, pues\_\_\_ no pue - de an - dar\_\_\_  
 dad\_\_\_, que el Dios de los cie - los  
 ret\_\_\_ Yo\_\_\_ soy car - pin - te - ro  
 se - ro, por\_\_\_ so - lo u - na no - che,  
 cie - lo, y\_\_\_ ma - dre va a ser\_\_\_

13 G<sup>7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> C

mi\_\_\_ es - po - sa a ma - da.  
 te\_\_\_ lo pre - mia - rá\_\_\_  
 de\_\_\_ nom - bre\_\_\_ Jo - sé\_\_\_  
 la\_\_\_ Rei - na\_\_\_ del cie - lo.  
 del\_\_\_ di - vi - no ver - bo.

ADENTRO

19 C G<sup>7</sup>

1. A - quí no es me - són si - gan a - de -  
 2. Ya se pue - den ir y no mo - les -  
 3. No me im - por - ta el nom - bre, dé - jen - me dor -  
 4. Pues si es u - na rei - na quien lo so - li -  
 5. ¿E - res tú Jo - sé? ¿Tu es - po - sa es Ma -

25 C C<sup>7</sup> F

lan - te, yo no de - bo a brir  
 tar por que si me en - fa - do,  
 mir pues que ya les di - go  
 ci - ta, ¿Có - mo es que de no - che,  
 rí - a? En - tren, pe - re - gri - nos,

31 G<sup>7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> C al

no sea al - gún tu - nan - te. (Última vez: a la coda)  
 os voy a a - pa - lear  
 que no he - mos de a - brir  
 an - da tan so - li - ta?  
 no los co - no - cí - a.

= 80

CODA C F C F C G C

En - tren san - tos pe - re - gri - nos, pe - re - gri - nos, re - ci - ban es - te rin - cón, que aun - que es  
 Can - te - mos con a - le - grí - a, a - le - grí - a, to - dos al con - si - de - rar, que Je -

42 C F C F C G C

po - bre la mo - ra - da, la mo - ra - da, os la doy de co - ra - zón.  
 sús, Jo - sé y Ma - rí - a, y Ma - rí - a, nos vi - nie - ron hoy a hon - rar.