

# An Advent Posada Journey

## Resources for the Primary School



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## Introduction

Dear teacher

In this booklet you will find ideas for bringing the Mexican tradition of *Posada* to life in your classroom or school in December. It is included in a lesson in Stepping Out (1<sup>st</sup> class) p. 119 in the Follow Me series.

Although this is a busy time of year, the Posada events can bring the story of Christmas alive in a fresh way without too much effort.

All the resources are in this booklet, wonderfully illustrated by Máire Kelly.

It is hoped you will find these ideas of use to you in this season of Advent.

Jacqui Wilkinson, Church of Ireland Centre, DCU.



## What is Posada?

In the Bible, the story is told of Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register under the Census. Joseph's family is from the city of David (Bethlehem), so they have to travel there – a journey of more than 100km. With Mary's pregnancy and the long journey, tradition has it that Mary travelled on a donkey, but this is not recorded in the Bible. Undoubtedly it would have made the journey easier, but not necessarily comfortable!

When Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem it is full of travellers and there is no available accommodation.

This story has been told in many ways over the centuries. In Latin American countries the traditional festival of 'Las Posadas' adds colour and creativity to the story.

**All you need is Mary and Joseph from a crib – knitted/ wooden/ handmade or whatever you have in school.**



## Early Posada celebrations

Posadas began in Mexico to teach people about Christmas. Las Posadas is Spanish for 'the inns'. The festival focuses on the story of the journey to Bethlehem and the challenges Mary and Joseph faced when they were unable to find anywhere to stay so that Mary could have her baby.

In Mexico, during the nine days leading up to Christmas Day, religious services would include representations of Mary and Joseph. Parties were held with piñatas. The fruits and sweets that poured out of the piñata represented the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the Christian way of life.



In time, posadas started to be held in local communities and in people's homes. At the beginning of a posada, people are divided in two groups, the ones "outside" are Mary and Joseph, and the ones "inside" are the innkeepers. Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay is acted out with Mary and Joseph going from innkeeper to innkeeper until they are finally let into an inn. After this tradition, the party proper starts. Posadas spread to other countries — such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela and of course the celebrations vary from place to place.

Today in Mexico, and in other places where the ceremony still takes place, it is common for children to either dress up as Mary and Joseph or carry statues of them and process through the village. The procession visits three houses and asks for somewhere to stay. Mary and Joseph are refused entry at the first two houses but are admitted at the third and there is often a party.

You can watch a simple explanation of the background to the festival on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KY2qdIVc-A>

## Learning about Mary and Joseph

Why do we tell the story each year about a journey taken over 2000 years ago by an ordinary young woman called Mary and her husband Joseph? These stories are found in the Gospel books of Matthew and Luke. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth in the north of the country around 4 BCE. Mary was a young Jewish woman (probably no more than 13 or 14 years old) who was engaged to be married to a carpenter named Joseph when she was told by an angel Gabriel that she was going to become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

This was quite a shock for Mary, particularly as the angel told her that the baby boy was to be called Jesus because he would be the Saviour of the World. Joseph needed some persuading by another angel, and he agreed to marry Mary and look after the baby as if he was his own.

At that time in history Israel was part of the Roman Empire and a census was announced. This meant that people had to travel to their home places. For Mary and Joseph, this involved travelling to the city of his ancestors, Bethlehem. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 90 km, but in order to avoid hilly and dangerous routes, they probably travelled more than 120km during the course of a week or so.

The Bible does not tell us how they travelled- we do not know if they actually afforded a donkey. We also do not know exactly when they arrived in Bethlehem or how long it was before the baby was born.

We do know that there was no room for them at the inn –which could have been a guest house or simply a room in a family's home. Tradition has it, that they found shelter where the animals were kept, probably a cave-like space under, or at the side of a house. It was in these difficult surroundings Mary gave birth to her baby. Again, we do not know whether she had help, we just know that when he was born, they wrapped him in swaddling clothes and used the animal's food trough as a cot.



## Posada ideas in school

1. Each class could take turns to process with Mary and Joseph to each other classroom on the days leading up to the end of term.

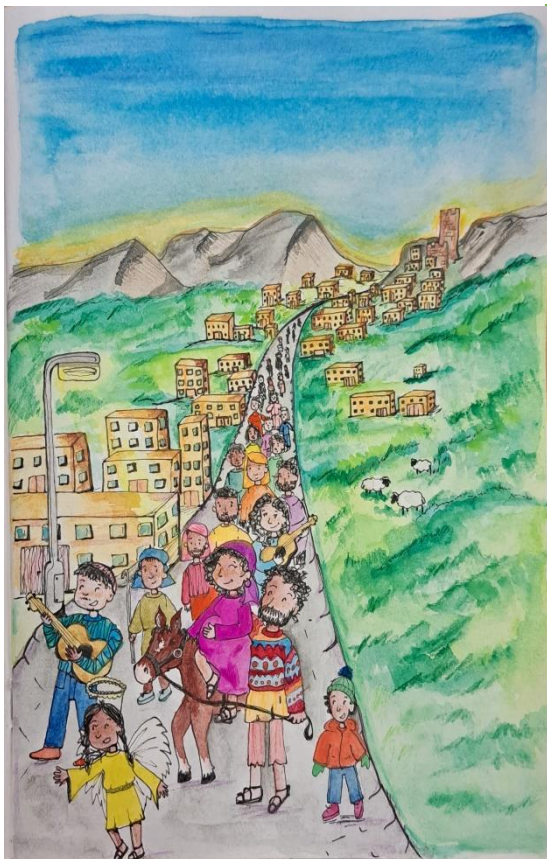
- ❖ At each classroom, the pupils could lead the class in a favourite Christmas carol and read the story of the birth of Jesus from the Bible and tell the class about the tradition of Posada. Prayers for this are on p. 8.
- ❖ The host class could show the visitors some of the Christmas preparations they have been doing.
- ❖ On the last day of Las Posadas, there could be a whole school assembly (resources are in this booklet p. 9)
- ❖ The visits could be recorded, and a photo diary created for the school to view at the final assembly.
- ❖ To fully replicate the essence of the Mexican festival you could have a star shaped piñata.



2. Mary and Joseph go home with a child/ family each night along with a notebook and possibly an LED candle. A poster for the rota is on p. 13.

- ❖ Children are asked to write in the notebook about what Mary and Joseph saw/ did in their house. They can write about dinner/ after school activities/ draw pictures/ stick in photos. At home, set up the Nativity together as a family and talk about the Christmas story. Light the candle if wished and say the prayer that Mary and Joseph bring with them on their travels which is available on p. 14.
- ❖ At the end of the journey Mary and Joseph arrive at either the school assembly (p. 9), school carol service or a parish crib service. To fully replicate the essence of the Mexican festival you could have a star shaped piñata.





In school we are learning about the Christmas tradition of Posada from Mexico.

In this festival, Mary and Joseph travel from place to place to find welcome.

As we learn about Posada and the story of Christmas we are also thinking about how we can help people in our community and in our world.



## At the Classroom Door

### **Prayer as the figures are handed over:**

*As you welcome these crib figures into your classroom today, may you think about how Jesus is welcomed into our homes at Christmas.*

### **Class receiving the figures say this welcoming prayer:**

*Dear God, you are always with us in our school,  
Help us to experience the joy of looking forward this Advent  
and make it a time of new beginnings.*

*We welcome Mary and Joseph into our classroom and pray that  
you will bless our class, our school and all who learn, teach and  
work here. Amen.*





## School Assembly

### Hymn/ Song

Make way, make way

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alCQ7fb0hEA>

### Greeting

Bible Reading: Luke chapter 2.

At that time, Caesar Augustus sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. This was the first registration taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

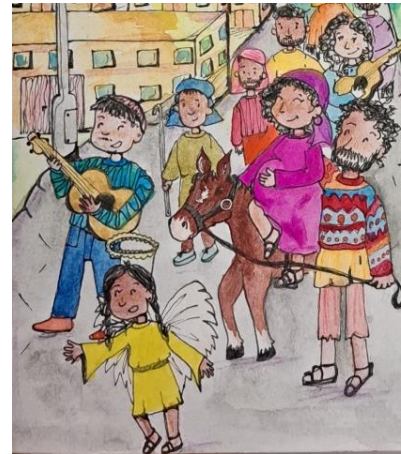
So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. Mary was now pregnant. While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. She wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed.

### Let us pray

Heavenly Father, through this season of Advent, we prepare for our Christmas celebrations of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ.

In all the busy times this term, help us to see the importance of your love for us. Show us new ways to share the message of your love for all people. We pray this in the name of Jesus, whose coming we eagerly await. **Amen.** (Praying Together, 2020)

Heavenly Father as we get closer to Christmas with all its excitement may we enjoy the special times at home with our families. We also pray for those children for whom this Christmas may be sad or lonely. As we give and receive presents, we pray that we will always remember the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of your son Jesus. **Amen.** (Praying Together, 2020)



Heavenly Father, may this Christmas be a time of sharing, giving, love and happiness. Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful occasion and for our friends and families. On this occasion, please help those who are less fortunate and lonely. Thank you for Christmas, a time that unites all friends and family. **Amen.**  
(Praying Together, 2020)

Dear God, we give thanks for our school and all the children (and families) who have been part of our Posada journey. We pray that as they 'welcomed Mary and Joseph' they will have peace in their homes this Christmas. **Amen.**

God, we pray for love, hope and peace in our families, our school, our community and our world. We pray this especially as we journey together towards celebrating your birth this Christmas. **Amen.**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the  
glory  
For ever and ever. Amen.



### **Prayer of Blessing**

Lord God, we ask you to bless all members of our school community this Christmas. As we have travelled with Mary and Joseph and heard the stories of the birth of Jesus, may our Posada activities remind us of the joy of the Christmas story. We ask for God's blessing on each one of us, our families, our school and our community, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



## For older classes

### A Bible reading and discussion prompt



Jesus said: Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me,

I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,

I was homeless and you gave me a room,

I was shivering and you gave me clothes,

I was sick and you stopped to visit,

I was in prison and you came to me.'

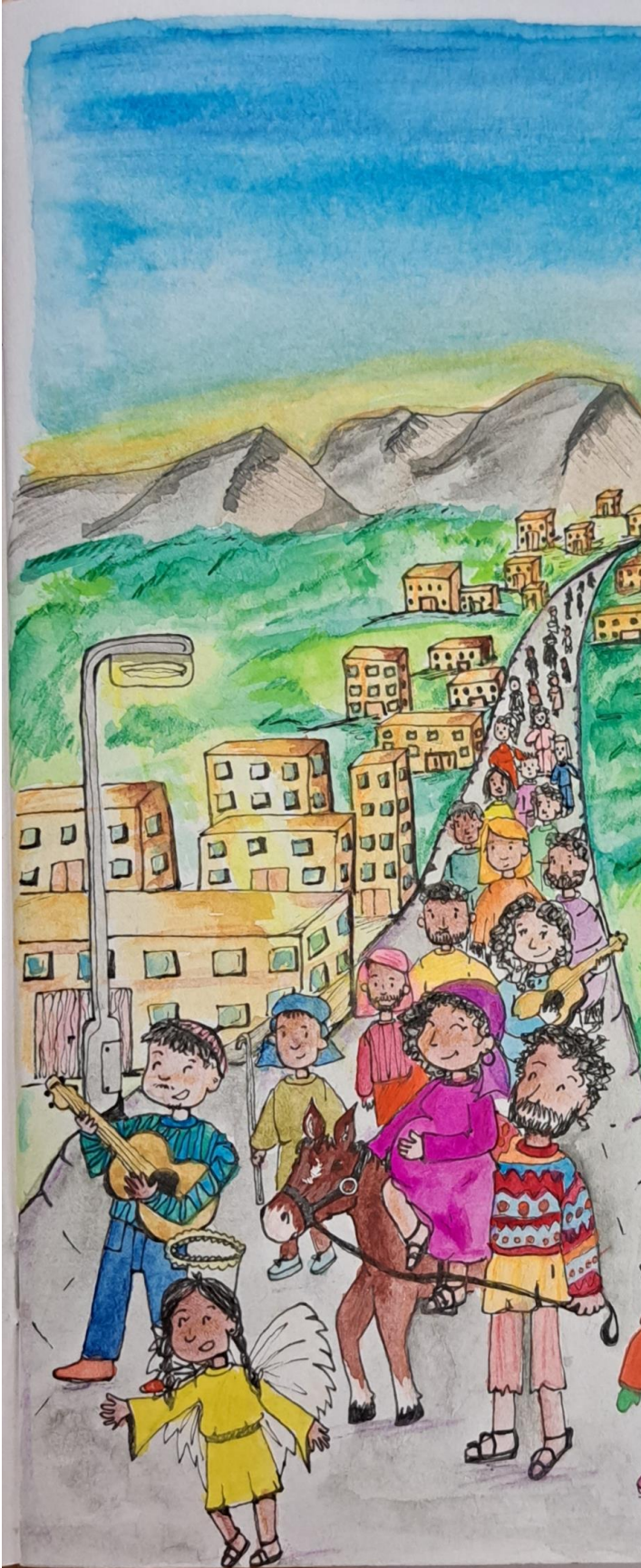
Matthew 25:4-36

Welcoming the weary travellers, if only for a night, demonstrates the importance of hospitality in Christianity. In many stories in the Bible people are told by God to care for each other, including caring for the stranger which is stated in Deuteronomy 10:19.

In the Bible reading above, Jesus identifies himself with those in need and says that our care for them is our care for him. Mary and Joseph, in our Posada experience have travelled more than 100km and are looking for shelter and care. In our Posada experience we welcome them into our homes, even if it is only temporarily. What does this inspire us to do for others?

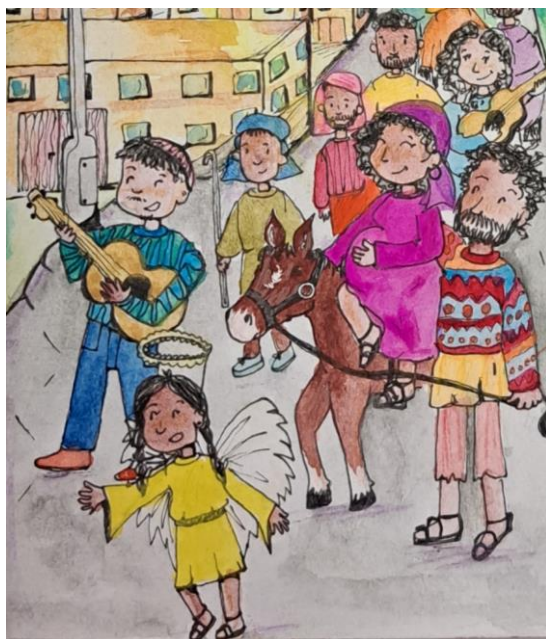


## Our Class Posada Journey





## Posada at home



**Tonight, it is your turn to look after Mary and Joseph. In the notebook write about what they saw or did while they were at your home.**

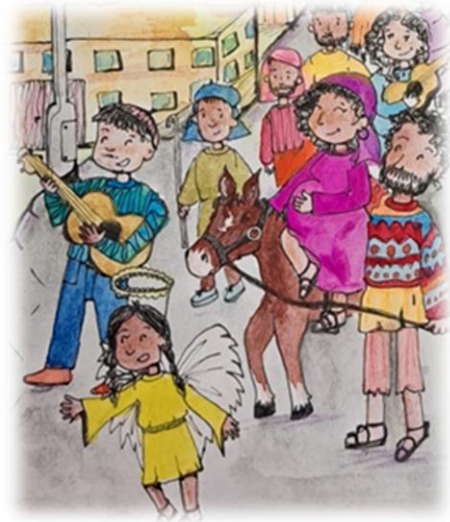
**Here is a prayer you can say this evening if you wish. You might light a candle.**

As we welcome Mary and Joseph into our home this evening, we think about all those who are travelling tonight.

We pray for all those who are looking for rest and shelter tonight in our towns and cities and in many different parts of the world. We thank God for all those who care for and comfort those in need.

May God bless us and all those we love as we journey with Mary and Joseph towards celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father as we get closer to Christmas with all its excitement may we enjoy the special times at home with our families. We also pray for those children for whom this Christmas may be sad or lonely. As we give and receive presents, we pray that we will always remember the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of your son Jesus. **Amen.** (Praying Together, 2020)



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