

Las Posadas

Christians in parts of Mexico and those who have migrated to other countries celebrate Las Posadas nightly beginning December 16 and ending December 24. Las Posadas is a liturgy of hospitality and commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, searching for lodging for the birth of the Christ Child.

Las Posadas begins as an outdoor procession. Traditionally, two people dress as los peregrinos (the pilgrims), Mary and Joseph, or images of Mary and Joseph are carried in the procession. Along the procession route, certain houses serve as “lodgings.” At each house, those inside sing to those outside, denying them entry. At the final stop, the los peregrinos are recognized and invited into the home.

Communities who observe *Las Posadas* should consider the following principles and practices:

1. Since the tradition of *Las Posadas* comes from a particular culture and language, those who plan an observance should engage in dialogue with those for whom these devotions are culturally indigenous, and seek to learn from their experience.
2. *An Order of Service for the Evening* may serve as a liturgy before the procession, with appropriate lessons and prayers for Advent included, either in the church or a home.
3. Participants may carry lights in procession.
4. The hymn, *Canto Para Pedir Posada* is traditionally sung in the rite.
5. At the final stop, the procession is welcomed for closing devotions. Such devotions may include personal testimony, the singing of hymns, the Lord’s Prayer, and other prayers and collects.
6. Following the closing devotions, refreshments or a meal are served.

El Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead

Christians in parts of Mexico and Central America keep All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2) with special devotions to honor the dead and pray for them. These devotions have spread beyond their geographical origins in Mexico into other languages and cultures. For those who are observing this tradition for the first time, adapt it to your own needs and consider engaging in conversation with communities or individuals that have experience with this tradition.

Communities who observe El Día de los Muertos should consider the following principles:

1. Practices for keeping the Day include adornment of an altar or a sacred space to offer reverence for the dead, which may be placed in a home, church, or cemetery. Photographs of those being remembered are traditionally displayed. A place for prayer may be provided nearby.
2. Devotions may include prayers and thanksgivings for the dead. Resources for prayers may be found in the burial rites or the propers for All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

A Service of Renaming

When an event or experience leads a baptized person to take or to be given a new name, the following may be used to mark this transition in the parish community. It is expected that the presider or someone appointed by the presider has prepared the candidate for this rite through pastoral conversation and theological reflection.

This new beginning is distinct from the new life begun in Holy Baptism, which conveys regeneration and the responsibilities of Christian discipleship.

The rite can be used on its own or in place of the Word of God during a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It is particularly commended for use on a major feast day or any of the following occasions: Advent 3 (Gaudete); Holy Name (Jan. 1); Presentation in the Temple (Feb. 2); The Last Sunday After the Epiphany (Transfiguration Sunday); The Feast of the Transfiguration (Aug. 6).

Throughout the rite, the pronouns “they,” “their,” and “them” are used, with corresponding verb forms. These pronouns should be adapted to the preference of the person receiving or claiming the new name, with appropriate adjustment to the accompanying verbs.

Opening Acclamation

Presider Blessed be the God of Sarai revealed as Sarah, Jacob who became Israel, and Simon called Peter.

People Blessed be the God who comes among us, reconciles us, and sets us free.

Song of Praise

A song of praise or the Gloria in excelsis is sung; in Advent and Lent, the Kyrie or Trisagion is used instead.

Collect

The Collect of the Day, or the following

Presider Blessed are you, God of growth and discovery; yours is the inspiration that has altered and changed our lives; yours is the power that has brought us to new dangers and opportunities. Set us, your new creation, to walk through this new world, watching and learning, loving and trusting, until your kingdom comes. *Amen.*

Readings

The service continues with the readings appointed for the day, readings from the list below, or other scriptural passages suitable to the occasion. If the rite takes place in the context of the Eucharist, a reading from the gospel is always included.

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-17 - *God changes the name of Sarai to Sarah*

Genesis 32: 22-31 - *Jacob wrestles at Peniel, becomes Israel*

Exodus 3:1-15 - *Moses is called to serve the God named I AM*

Isaiah 42:1-9 - *"Here is my servant whom I uphold"*

Isaiah 43:1-7 - *"I have called you by name, you are mine"*

Isaiah 56: 1-8 - *"I will give them an everlasting name"*

Psalms 8 - *How majestic is God's name*

Psalms 23 - *The Lord is my Shepherd*

Psalms 40 - *"[God] put a new song in my mouth"*

Psalms 96 - *"Sing to the Lord a new song"*

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - *We are transformed from glory to glory*

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 - *In Christ, there is a new creation*

Galatians 3:27-28 - *In Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek...*

Philippians 2:9-13 - *Christ's name above all names*

1 John 3:1-2 - *What we will be has not yet been revealed*

Revelation 21:1-6 - *'See, I am making all things new'*

Matthew 16:13-19 - *"You are Peter"*

Matthew 17:1-9 - *The Transfiguration*

Luke 2:15-21 - *The naming of Jesus*

John 20:11-18 - *The risen Lord calls Mary by name*

John 20: 19-29 - *blessed are those who have not seen but believe*

Reflections or Sermon

The candidate may be prepared to offer brief reflections here in place of a Sermon. Depending on the occasion, it may be appropriate to invite others to speak.

On Sundays and other Major Feasts, the Nicene Creed follows the sermon, all standing.

Prayers of the People

Prayers of the People or a Litany created for the occasion are offered, according to the directions at page 359 in the Book of Common Prayer.

Rite of Renaming

Presider Hear the invitation of God:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh; even though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:16-20)

The Presider turns to the candidate, asking,
How do you respond to God's invitation?

Candidate I am a new creation, grateful to embody Christ's image.

Presider We are here to affirm the name of N. This name expresses who N. is and who they are becoming, through the grace of God.

We honor the name given to them by their parents and acknowledge that the time has come to declare a new name. We honor the name they have chosen, and acknowledge those loved ones who have made holy space for a new name to be spoken. This new name is the culmination of a journey of discovery and, at the same time, a new beginning.

Turning to the gathered community, the Presider asks,

Will you do all in your power to assist N. to embody Christ's message of reconciliation?

People We will.

Presider Will you honor N. in name and in spirit as they continue on their path?

People We will.

Presider Dynamic and holy God, we remember how you changed the names of Abraham and Sarah, as they set out to follow you. We marvel that you changed the name of Jacob, after a long night of wrestling with you. We recall our ancestors in the faith who were given new names as their vocations to serve you were revealed. We now declare publicly and affirm the name you have bestowed upon N.

All lay hands upon the head of the candidate, or upon the shoulders of those around the candidate.

N., receive the blessing of God, the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Walk in the Spirit, this day and always, knowing that God has made an everlasting covenant with you that shall never be cut off. *Amen.*

Presider Jesus said, 'Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' (Luke 10:20)

People Amen. Alleluia.

The Presider concludes with one of the following collects:

Holy One of blessing, you created us in your image and pronounced us good. We give you thanks for the gift of life itself. We thank you for our individual names, which connect us to the One who spoke all creation into being. We rejoice in our shared calling to the ministry of reconciliation.

God of transformations, you set us free to change and grow, even while you hold us close in love and grace. Send us forth to love and serve you, in Christ's holy Name. *Amen.*

Sources Consulted and/or Adapted

Justin Tanis, *Trans-gendered: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003), 189-193.

Changes: Prayers and Services Honoring Rites of Passage (Church Publishing, 2007), 47-49.

A New Zealand Prayer Book (Harper One, 4th edition, 1997), 475