

Fourth Sunday of Advent (A) - Posadas

Advent is a season that should draw us closer to Jesus's birth, we are called to not only prepare our homes, offices, churches, or communities, but more importantly to prepare our hearts for his birth. One of the ways in which many Latin American communities prepare themselves for the first and second coming is by reenacting the Nativity story. In the 16th century, Spanish missionaries started reenacting the Nativity in a way to teach the good news to indigenous people in Mexico. These reenactments took the name of "*Posadas*" or "inn, lodging", (exact translation is a place of rest), these *Posadas* blended catechesis, prayer and community, they became a true devotion that is still practiced today.

Again, the word *Posada* means "place of rest", but in the devotion it represents 9 nights from December 16 to the 24th, where the community remembers the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem searching for a place of rest a *Posada* for the Son of God to be born. The nine nights could be seen as a novena, but it represents the nine months of Mary's pregnancy, to remind us that God enters the world patiently and humbly.

Posadas consist of a procession where families and neighbors walk together, carrying candles, images of Mary and Joseph, they stop at doors and sing a call-and-response dialogue. Those outside represent the Holy Family, asking for shelter. Those inside play the role of the innkeepers, who at first refuse. Door after door closes—until finally one opens on the final day, the 9th day, this is to echo the words of Scripture: "*There was no room for them in the inn*". In *Las Posadas*, unlike the first Bethlehem, **someone eventually says yes**. The door opens, the pilgrims are welcomed, prayer is offered, scripture is proclaimed, Christ is welcomed... Then comes celebration: food shared, warm drinks offered, and often a **seven-pointed piñata**, representing the seven deadly sins, is broken symbolizing the struggle against sin, so that the blessings inside—fruit and sweetness—can be received.

Las Posadas are not only about reenacting and remembering the past. They challenge us to reflect on our lives **today: Do I make room for Christ in my life? Do I recognize Him in the poor, the stranger, the wounded? Where have I closed doors out of fear, busyness, or indifference?**

St. Joseph is a great example of making room for Christ, of not letting fear close the doors permanently. When St. Joseph found out about Mary being pregnant and being with child, he was afraid, him being a righteous man wanted to do the right thing but at the same time not cause any harm to Mary, hence his decision to leave her quietly. St. Joseph changed his mind, and you might think well... if I had a messenger from God talk to me even, **I** would change my mind. But in reality, God talks to us all the time, he speaks to each of us daily, yet we either fail to listen or pretend that we didn't listen. St. Joseph was in a critical situation, his wife was expecting, he wasn't the biological father, he was afraid and he was being told to trust and open his life to baby Jesus. It is easy for us to look at the story in hindsight and correct the narrative, criticize the actions and pretend like we would do better. Think of a friend coming to you and saying, I just got married, now my wife is expecting a child, it is not my biological child but its okay, it is God's son. I had a dream that told me all about it. **What would you say, what would you think?**

St. Joseph trusted and opened his doors, heart and life to Christ. He didn't fully understand what was going on, he didn't understand the magnitude of the situation, he didn't understand it all, yet he trusted

and did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, took his wife into his home, he accepted Emmanuel (God with us). I feel like at times our attempt to understand everything before we accept or trust, prevents us from opening ourselves to the great Emmanuel. It seems like at times we are very guarded and we do not let the guards down unless we know for sure what is going to happen, why its going to happen, in other words unless I understand the what, how, when, why, where of things I do not trust, I do not allow for the great Emmanuel in my life. The challenge is that our ways are not God's ways and him being an infinite being, we will not get to understand it all, so we would never trust or allow him to be with us, if we need to understand it all... St. Anselm of Canterbury said **“I don't seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand”**.

Advent is meant to get us closer to Christ. Like *the Posadas*, our life is a journey or pilgrimage towards sainthood, towards heaven. When we accept Christ to be with us, we become part of his body, part of a community of pilgrims. We journey together with the end goal of heaven in mind, as we journey, we encounter obstacles and challenges but as a community, we help each other in the journey. Like the innkeepers, we are invited to move from refusal to hospitality, from distraction to welcome, from closed hearts to open lives. Today, *Las Posadas* continue in homes, parishes, schools, and communities—not just as cultural tradition, but as a living call to discipleship. They remind us that Emmanuel, *God-with-us*, comes knocking daily. The most important door for us to open is not made of wood or stone—it is the door of the heart.

May this Advent teach us to open it. May our homes become places of welcome. May Christ find room among us and as the psalmist states **Let the Lord Enter; he is the King of Glory.**