

¡Bienvenidos!

Welcoming

Hispanic-Legacy Individuals and Recent Migrants  
and Sharing traditions In the Parish Community

Soon Hispanic-legacy and recent migrant families and individuals will become the largest ethnic minority in the United States. In the following pages are suggestions for welcoming and introducing them into the Episcopal community and, at the same time, ideas about ways that they can share their cultural experiences with parish members.

These proposals do not outline an exact procedure, rather they recommend casual encounters that can be modified to suit the participants. An afternoon or evening welcome gathering might feature a discussion of religious celebrations in the country of origin compared with practices in the parish. For example, the group might discuss the festival calendar as celebrated by the parish and how the same events are celebrated by Hispanic individuals. Perhaps the most common, interesting, and variable such event is the Christmas holiday.

1. The festival calendar:

*The conversations about different traditions and their relation to each other should be interesting and prompt some intriguing thoughts for conversation. For example, when looking at Christmas, what is the relationship between Advent and such Latin American practices as Posadas or Pase de Dios?*

**Christmas**

The Christmas celebration varies throughout the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world and should provide some intriguing topics for discussions of family and community ways of marking the event. Here is information on the holiday in various countries.

**Cuba:** Cubans celebrate Noche Buena, or Christmas Eve. The nativity scene, rather than Christmas trees and Santa Claus, figures prominently in homes. The celebration more than anything focuses on family and draws them together with friends and neighbors and even co-workers stopping by. The traditional meal is a whole suckling pig, or at least a pork roast, prepared in a backyard oven, along with black beans, tostones (twice fried plantain slices), croquettes, with other meats and sides, and ends with flan or chocolate cake (made Cuba-style with espresso and rum frosting). The meal continues until midnight, when presents are opened. The rest of Christmas Day is more about recovery than festivities.

**Mexico:** Festivities across the Mexico begin on December 12 with the celebration of the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Latin American, Mexico, particularly Mexico City, and continue to January 6. This is often called “the bridge” (“el Puente”) the period between regular work or school classes. Throughout the capital there are pilgrims going to the Virgin’s basilica, many of whom have been traveling for days and some completing the trip on their knees.

The tradition of posadas continues each night from December 16 until Christmas Eve. Posada, translated as ‘inn’, refers to processions and parties for both children and adults. Houses are decorated and children pass from door to door singing a song and asking if there’s “room at the inn.” This recreates the Christmas tale of Mary and Joseph doing the same thing in Bethlehem. The celebration only ends on Christmas Eve when all are finally invited in to celebrate and enjoy a Christmas party filled with food, drink and, of course, piñatas.

Along with the posada tradition, Mexicans are well-known for their love of Nativity scenes, called nacimientos. While many families create one of their own interpretation, towns also participate in the tradition, often creating in the plaza large replicas of the manger, surrounded by animals and shepherds. The nacimiento is usually set up on December 16 (the day that the posadas begin), the baby Jesus is added at night on December 24, and the three kings are added on January 5.

As in Cuba, Christmas Eve in Mexico, known as Nochebuena, is the focus of festivities rather than Christmas Day. Mexicans will typically take part in the final posada celebrations before enjoying an elaborate family meal and going to mass to begin Christmas Day. Fireworks and poinsettia flowers (called flores de nochebuena) are often part of the celebration. The Western tradition of decorating a Christmas tree has also been adopted in Mexico and some towns include one in the plaza.

An additional Christmas celebration in Mexico is the Día de Los Santos Inocentes on December 28--not to be confused with Día de Los Angelitos, November 1 (his day of mischief is the Mexican version of April Fools' Day).

Santa Claus does exist in Mexican Christmas celebrations, although he delivers the presents late on the evening of December 23 and the early hours of December 24. Before the adoption of this US and Western European tradition, Mexican children received their gifts on the Día de Los Reyes (January 6). They previously wrote a letter to the Reyes Magos, and sent it into the sky tied to a balloon. Each child left a shoe on the windowsill in which to receive the presents.

Some vibrant regional Christmas traditions still exist. Notable is Oaxaca's Noche de Rábanos (Radish Night) which is held on December 23 and features carving Christmas characters, animals, toys, politicians, and imaginary creatures out of radishes and then displaying them. An annual contest takes place in the state capital. In Yucatan, there is an emphasis on a version of Christmas caroling—the carols are called villancicos in Spanish. In English-speaking countries the Christmas season may be announced with “The Little Drummer Boy” or “Silver Bells” playing in shops and on the radio. In Yucatán one hears "Los Peces en el Río"(the Fishes in the River) or "Arre Borrequito" or “Las Campanas de Belen” (Bethlehem's Bells) and translations of English songs such as “Noche de Paz,” the Spanish version of “Silent Night.”

Pastorelas, or nativity plays are especially popular in the parishes of Tepoztlán, Morelos.<sup>1</sup> These theatrical stories narrate tales of the shepherds on their way to see baby Jesus. In the plays, the shepherds encounter various obstacles on their journey, with devils and angels making appearances and trying to persuade the shepherds which way they should take to the manger. The plays originated during Mexico's colonial period as a way to teach indigenous peoples about Catholic dogma. The scripts have been preserved in many parishes for decades and the production is a major community undertaking.

Food is a major part of the holiday celebration in Mexico just as it is in the United States. Discussing and sharing each other's traditional foods can be an easy way to welcome newcomers into the parish. Traditional foods eaten during the Christmas season festivities in Mexico include **Ensalada de Noche Buena**, Christmas Eve Salad, that usually contains lettuce and beets, with other ingredients that vary according to location and the chef's preference. These may include

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<sup>1</sup> <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/mexico/articles/how-is-christmas-celebrated-in-mexico/> accessed June 21, 2021.

apple, carrot, orange, pineapple, jicama, pecans or peanuts, and pomegranate seeds as a garnish. The combination of colors makes the salad particularly festive. **Tamales** are prepared corn masa with a variety of different fillings, wrapped in corn husks (or occasionally banana leaves), and steamed. Because tamale preparation is time-consuming, it is special holiday food and only made in large batches a few times throughout the year. Often many members of the family assist in making them during parties called tamaladas. **Bacalao** (dried salted codfish) starts showing up in markets and grocery stores throughout Mexico as Christmas approaches. This dish, although of European origin, has become a common component of a traditional Christmas feast and can be prepared in a variety of ways. Bacalao a la Vizcaina is a popular recipe in which the cod is stewed with tomatoes, capers, olives, and potatoes. **Romeritos**, a green vegetable with small leaves, resembles the rosemary plant for which it is named (although its flavor is not at all like rosemary!). It is often served as romeritos en revoltijo, with shrimp cakes and doused in mole. This dish is also served during Lent. **Pozole** is hominy soup made with pork or chicken and seasoned with chile and garlic. Garnishes include shredded lettuce or cabbage, thinly sliced radishes, avocado, oregano, and lime wedges. This makes a hearty meal and a great party food which, besides being a popular choice for a Christmas dinner, is also served during Independence Day or Cinco de Mayo parties. **Turkey** is native to Mexico and is another popular choice for the Christmas Eve dinner. It may be roasted, or served with mole, a rich sauce of ground chiles and chocolate, with other ingredients. Served with a hot drink, **buñuelos** make an excellent treat on a cold night. This fried treat is like a sweet tostada which is sprinkled with sugar or doused in syrup. In Oaxaca there are special stands set up at Christmastime selling buñuelos and after enjoying the sweet fritter, you make a wish and throw your clay plate on the ground, where it smashes to bits. This tradition is said to spring from a pre-Hispanic practice in which all the

dishes were broken at the end of a calendar cycle. Hot fruit punch is made with tejocotes (Mexican hawthorn), which look like crab apples but have large pits and a unique flavor. Guavas, apples, and other fruit are added and the drink is flavored with cinnamon and sweetened with piloncillo. This is a warming beverage, whether taken with or without piquete or splash of alcohol.

**Ecuador:** Christmas or Navidad, is probably the most celebrated holiday in Ecuador. With generally warm weather, many events take place outdoors during the season. The events, many of which are especially dedicated to celebrating the birth of Jesus, feature parades, dances and firework displays. The Christmas season starts with a “novena” on December 15, beginning the 9 days of preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ. Families, neighbors, and friends gather each night in a different house, to pray, sing carols, and eat a meal together.

Ecuador has a family-oriented society, so during Christmas season family activities increase and Christmas Eve dinner is basically a family reunion. Everyone comes with their spouses, children, and sometimes even their parents-in-law, to the house of the head of the family. The host provides food and the Christmas tree. People enjoy food, conversation, music, and each other’s company. Then tradition requires that nearly everyone leave the house with the children to search for the star of Bethlehem, that revealed the birth of Jesus. The adults who remain indoors arrange the presents under the Christmas tree, and when the others return the children spot the presents. Handing out the gifts has special meaning. The oldest member of the family selects one present at a time, reads the name of the lucky recipient, and hands over the gift. Traditionally, the recipient immediately unwraps the gift and thanks the giver right away.

Apart from giving gifts and spending time with the family, Christmas in Ecuador also means decorating the house. Many families hang up Christmas mugs, dolls, cards, and Christmas

socks on the walls, put decorations on the front door, and even install lighted statues of Santa or Rudolph in the garden,

Most families also display prefer Nativity scenes with figures depicting the birth of Christ. The tradition has such popularity that Ecuadorians participate in nativity contests and large size scenes are installed in the malls, gated communities, and in the central plazas of Towns.

This country that celebrates food throughout the year with an amazing cuisine boasts an outstanding Christmas meal with many different variations of rice: rice with cheese, rice with corn, rice with stew, spicy rice, sweet rice, and even sweet and spicy rice (called Arroz Navideño, or Christmas rice). There is, of course, chicken, turkey, potatoes, and salad, but rice remains the biggest part of Christmas dinner. An abundance of sweets includes candies, cakes, biscuits, and cupcakes in any various shapes and forms. After this traditional dinner, Ecuadorians attend the “misa de gallo” (the Rooster Mass), or midnight mass, on December 24.

Ecuadorians are a musical people who sing whenever and wherever they can. So singing Christmas carols is an integral part of Christmas. Some families sing together sitting at the Nativity scene, sometimes they sing at church, sometimes they just sing in the mall or on the street.

“El Pase del Niño Viajero “ is a tradition unique to the southern part of the country. This parade happens each day from the First Sunday of Advent and continuing each Sunday until Carnival, with its greatest intensity beginning December 24. The procession features floats, special costumes, food, and music. The Angel of the Star (a boy dressed as an angel with a star belt on his head, a white suit with wings, and carrying a rod topped by a star) leads the parade

recalling the star that guided the shepherds and wise men to Bethlehem. Following the Angel comes the Wise men or Three Kings (Gaspar, Melchor and Baltazar, representing White, Black, and Indigenous ethnicities), shepherds, musical groups, floats, and Tucumán ribbon dancers. The parade ends with a float dedicated to the Child Jesus. Musicians lead floats along main streets to depict the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. “El Pase del Niño Viajero “ serves as a prominent social and cultural symbol, as it helps to maintain social cohesion in the community through reciprocity and redistribution of experiences and goods.

The Christmas vigil is accompanied by candles on the eve of mass for the Christ Child. The following day—the day of the Fiesta--features, food, drink, card games, music and dancing. The festival centers on the Catedral of the Immaculate Conception, organized by the archdiocese of Cuenca, Niño Viajero Pastoral Commission, the Brother Miguel group, Catholic University of Cuenca, and the rest of the worshippers. As for the Christ Child during the vigil he is dressed in a costume, perfumed with incense, and surrounded with candles and flowers. Worshippers enjoy different foods and the typical drink, chicha.

The Christ child mass, considered by many as one of the most beautiful traditions of Ecuador’s national popular religion. Images of Jesús, provided by different people, are placed on the altar. Each has Jesus dressed in bright, embroidered, luxurious dresses resting on lavish embroideries on a tray of flowers between multicolored lights and clouds of incense. The celebration includes village musicians, singing children and chorus troupes inside the church. Outside fireworks explode and the band plays indigenous music. The people’s joyful spirit expressed with elaborate costumes, musicians, animals, and fireworks completely breaks with conventional church services and mixes Andean with European practices in an eclectic way.

## **January 6,**

Three Kings Day or Epiphany is celebrated in several ways in Latin American countries. In some places it is the day when children receive gifts, from the kings rather than Santa Claus. It is also a day for serving a traditional cake or bread made in a circular form and called either Three Kings cake or ring cake (rosca de los reyes). A tiny plastic baby or a bean or seed symbolizing the Jesus the Christ child, is baked in the cake. When the cake is served the person who has the slice with the symbol of the Christ Child becomes the godparent (the compadre or comadre) or host of the baby Jesus and has the responsibility of sponsoring a reception or meal on Candlemas. In many Hispanic communities, Epiphany includes celebration with parades, carnival rides, and games, and, of course, fireworks.

The Three Kings Cake or Bread could provide a pleasant opportunity for parish members to come together, share the cake, and talk about holiday memories of Epiphany.

## **February 2, Candlemas** or the Feast of the Presentation.

Candlemas, which occurs 40 days after the birth of Jesus, commemorates the ritual purification of Mary and celebrates his presentation to God in the Temple at Jerusalem. This could be one of the most interesting religious feasts for parish members and guests to discuss because its meaning and celebration vary greatly by country and it is not a major event in the U.S.. The Christmas season in many places ends on El Día de la Candelaria, Candlemas Day, celebrated February 2. Before Christmas was recognized as its own feast day, the feast of Candlemas was celebrated on February 14, the 40th day after Epiphany (January 6). Near the end of the fourth century, the Church at Rome had begun to celebrate the Nativity on December 25. Roman Catholics knew this feast day as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary until the

1969 when Vatican II introduced changes in the Church's calendar. The celebration now represents a combined feast of the Feast of the Purification of Mary and the Feast of Candlemas in honor of the Presentation of the Lord. In several countries, Candlemas involved the blessing of candles on the Feast of the Presentation on February 2. This is likely where the name of the feast originated. Parish members lit the candles after they were blessed, and formed a procession through the darkened church while singing the Canticle of Simeon. While the procession and blessing of the candles is not often performed in the United States today, Candlemas remains an important feast in many European and Latin American countries. The reforms of Vatican II stressed the events of purification and presentation be commemorated together. Until the Second Vatican Council, these feasts on February 2 marked the end of the Christmas season. Today, the season ends January 6.

Candlemas maintains a connection to Three Kings Day that is made stronger through the Rosca de los Reyes cake. The person who got the slice of cake with the baby figurine on Three Kings Day becomes the "Godparent of the Child" and the host of a dinner or party held on February 2.

**Mexico:** Candlemas was introduced in Mexico following the Spanish occupation in 1521. Like many other Spanish and Catholic customs it quickly acquired some pre-Columbian indigenous elements. The date merged with the Aztec celebration when people appealed to the gods Chalchiuhtlicue, Tláloc, and the Tlalocues for rain and good harvest by making offerings of maize and tamales. The tamales, which are the major dish of the meal, the sauces and the ingredients with which they are made, as well as the atole and champurrado with which they are accompanied, represent a rich display of gastronomy and history on the holiday.

The Mexican celebration is tied closely to el Dia de los Reyes, February 2 is the date in which the families take the baby Jesus from the Nativity scene to be dressed in clothing that expresses the hope for the family's children—a soccer uniform, a doctor's white coat, symbols of a university or another profession—and presented at the parish church. Some families who acquire a new image for their nativity scene, in the first year they dress him in white, without throne or crown. In the second year, they change his clothes to a colored dress, and the third year he is dressed as the King, indicating that he can already perform miracles. The family meal follows. Whoever drew the bean on Epiphany, the “godparent,” will be the one to carry out the adoration and dressing of the baby Jesus. The godparent host must also provide the tamales, echoing the pre-Christian past tradition of offerings of maize. The whole family is invited to this meal (often the same people as for the Rosca at Epiphany), which gives the festival an aspect of family and sharing.

Memories of these events are often passed down from generation to generation in families, not only in Mexico but also in Mexican communities around the world. This can be another interesting topic for conversation within the parish.

On Candlemas, many Christians (especially Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, Orthodox and Roman Catholics) also bring their candles to their local church, where they are blessed and then used for the rest of the year. These blessed candles serve as a symbol of Jesus Christ, who referred to Himself as the Light of the World. In the United States, this emphasis on light, as well as the timing of the feast, falling as it does in the last weeks of winter, led to a secular holiday celebrated on the same date: Groundhog Day.

Other celebrations occur in various locations in the Christian world. In France, Candlemas (French: La Chandeleur) is also considered the day of crêpes. To celebrate

Candlemas, all the candles in the house should be lit and manger scenes should be put away as this is last feast of the Christmas cycle.[

Luxembourg makes the holiday center around children. In small groups, they roam the streets in the afternoon or evening of February 2, holding a lighted lantern or homemade wand, singing traditional songs at each house or store, especially "Léiwer Härgottsblieschen". In exchange for the music, they hope to receive a reward, formerly bacon, peas, or biscuits, but now sweets or loose change.

**Puerto Rico:** In Puerto Rico, the Candlemas feast officially ends the Christmas season. The festivities include a procession with the statue of the "Virgen de la Candelaria" carried on the shoulders of parishoners. Others follow with lit candles. The procession continues until they reach the church where a Mass is celebrated. In the evening, the festivities continue with a giant bonfire and singing.

: The Virgin of Candelaria (patron of the Canary Islands) is also a feature of the celebration in Tenerife and the Philippines. The identification of the Candlemas with the Virgin Mary began on the island of Tenerife, where as the Virgin of Candelaria, she became the patron of the Canary Islands. Popularly called La Morenita, the Virgin Mary is celebrated throughout the Canary Islands. The center of worship is located in the city of Candelaria in Tenerife. She is depicted as a Black Madonna. The "Royal Basilica Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Candelaria" (Basilica of Candelaria) is considered the main church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the Canary Islands.] Her feast is celebrated on February 2 (Fiesta de la Candelaria) and August 15, the patronal feast of the Canary Islands.

In the Philippines, she is the patroness of Western Visayas region enshrined in Jaro Cathedral or the National Shrine of Our Lady of Candles under the Archdiocese of Jaro (with a feast day every 2 February) and Barangay Tatala in Binangonan, Rizal, which celebrates her feast on the First Saturday of February. In Silang, Cavite, her feast is observed locally as a triduum from February 1 to 3, with February 2 kept as the actual feast day.

#### Guatemala

**Guatemala:** The Virgin of Candelaria is the patron saint of Jacaltenango and her feast on February 2, marking the end of the Christmas season.

**Peru:** The Virgin of Candelaria is the patron saint of the city of Puno in Peru and the feast day celebration is one of the largest festivals of culture, music, and dancing in the country. Events are related to the cultures of the Quechua and Aymara peoples, to the mestizos of the Altiplano, and to the number of people directly and indirectly involved from the cities. Performers present more than 200 dances in more than 150 dance sets, including native dances from various communities. As many as 40,000 dancers and 5000 musicians are involved directly and 25,000 other people serve as directors, sponsors, embroiderers of costumes and makers of masks, shoes, bells, and other items. It stands out with the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the Carnival in Oruro, Bolivia as one of the three largest festivals in South America.

Puno's commitment to the Virgen de la Candelaria originated in 1781 when the city was under siege by the troops of Túpac Amaru, an indigenous rebel leader. The fearful citizens took the Virgin out in procession with lighted candles and accompanied by groups of sikuris (panpipe blowers). The massive, noisy nocturnal manifestation confused the invaders who fled the area.

Puno's residents attributed their salvation to a miracle and named "Mamacha" Candelaria as their patron saint. This gives a local community meaning to the Candlemas celebration.

### Carnival and Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent throughout Latin America and Spanish-speaking world and it is commemorated in much the same way as in the United States by a mass that includes the marking of the forehead with a cross of ashes. Because of the fasting and social restraints of the 40 day period, it is preceded in many places by celebrations known as Carnival or Fat Tuesday.

The largest Carnival celebration, famous worldwide is in Rio de Janeiro, but there are other locations with major carnival celebrations as well. These include the town of Recife also in Brazil, and Veracruz, Costa Chica, and Huejotzingo in Mexico. The specific local customs observed in the various places strengthen the sense of community.

**Bolivia:** Carnival in Oruro, Bolivia, demonstrates how individuals and communities can move celebrations, create stories of redemption and allow community practices to become a part of a general religious celebrations. The feast day of Our Lady of the Mineshaft (Virgin of Socavón), for example, migrated from the fixed festival of Candlemas, February 2, to the movable feast of the days of Carnival before Ash Wednesday. Identified by the travel book *Lonely Planet* as one of the world's best festivals and Bolivia's largest, it has been recognized by UNESCO as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." The festival, which lasts the 10 days leading to Ash Wednesday, is highlighted by La Diablada, the "Dance of the Devils." The opening procession the Saturday before Ash Wednesday features so many dancers and musicians that it can take up to 20 hours to complete. Originally an indigenous

festival, the celebration later was transformed to incorporate a Christian ritual around the Virgin of Candelaria (Our Lady of the Mineshaft), combining the pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Tunnel and a traditional parade including performances by groups of folk dancers. The traditional Llama llama or Diablada became the leading traditional dance of the festival.

Legend says that when Oruro was a small town called Uru Uru, a monster called Wari tried to destroy the residents because they were converting to the Christianity. The Virgin interceded to save the people. Later she also appeared to the notorious bandit Chiru-Chiru who was morally wounded and hiding in the shaft of an abandoned silver mine. The Virgin appeared and he repented of his sins. After his death, his body was discovered and beside it on the wall a mural had miraculously appeared of the Virgin wearing a red robe with a blue mantle and holding a flaming candle. The Sanctuary of the Mineshaft (Sanctuario del Socavón) was constructed to shelter the miraculous image and the Virgin was given the name Virgen del Socavón. A stained glass window in the church depicts Chiru-Chiru's conversion and over the doors of the Sanctuary is inscribed: "You who fall into a life of crime can still be saved; come and prostrate yourselves at the feet of the Virgin and mourn your sins." A 149 foot high statue of the Virgin of Socavón, also called the Virgin of Candelaria, was unveiled in 2013 and is particularly venerated by Bolivian miners.

Another particular element of Candelaria in Oruro is the use of matracas, often called ratchet noise makers in English. As interesting as these artistic noise makers are as objects, it is their raspy sounds that contribute to Oruro's Carnival and Holy Week celebrations. Spanish missionaries who sought to repress the worship of native gods promoted community celebrations and carnival proved to be one of the most popular. Indigenous dancers in sly retaliation for the suppression of much of their culture and to turn the world upside down, celebrate the old ways,

and mock church authorities, dressed in spectacular devil masks and carried matracas. They were joined by other masqueraders called Morenos portraying African slave workers, who, like the Bolivian peasants were forced to work the mines. The noisemakers, that became increasingly elaborate, produced a memorable creaking noise. The sounds were an echo of the community's history, reproducing the grating chains dragged behind the slaves' feet as they went to the mines.

Perhaps the sound recalls the history of slaves in the mines, or perhaps it represents only an invention of the residents of Oruro as they seek to give value to the experience of Afro-Bolivians in their town and the diasporic current in recent Latin America (since, say, the 1920s, but clearly since the 1960s) recognizing the cultural contributions of the Africans ripped from their homes and brought as slaves to the Western hemisphere.<sup>2</sup>

**Venezuela:** El Callao Carnival in Venezuela mixes in traditions from the West Indies, the French Antilles, Trinidad with those native to Venezuela itself. Two of the more distinctive costume styles are the Madamas and the Devils. The Madamas are dancers who wear distinctive African headscarves and robes. During Carnival, the Devils dress in frightening masks, both traditional and modern (including Superman, Zorro, and Snow White), along with red-and-black costumes.

**Colombia:** Barranquilla Carnival is a four-day celebration, including native dances, in Colombia that has its roots in European, African and Indian traditions. UNESCO named it a "World Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." The festival's dances are

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<sup>2</sup> Lisa Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth: The Festivals of Colonial South American Mining Towns* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), especially chapter 3, "Festive Natives in Potosí, from Audience to Performance," pp. 87-120. The participation of slave and freed individuals in their own brotherhoods and sisterhoods in New Spain, is discussed in Nicole von Germeten, "Black Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods: Participatory Christianity in New Spain's Mining Towns" in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia for Latin America, (online), editor, William H. Beezley.

influenced by dances from the Americas, the African Congo, and Spain. The music combines drum ensembles and musicians playing wind instruments. The Grand Parade features a fusion of cultural and folk dances based on historical and current events.

### Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

Across Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world, Lent (Cuaresma), especially the last seven days known as Holy Week (Semana Santa), and Easter are celebrated in much the same way. Most countries, with large populations of Catholic believers, approach the death and resurrection of Christ as an occasion for great, albeit somber, festival-making with processions, celebrations, and reenactments filling the streets. Some of the best known celebrations take place in:

**Bolivia:** Copacabana, a top destination in Bolivia, is located on the shores of Lake Titicaca and draws thousands of Bolivians for a celebration without equal. The major event is the annual 150-kilometer pilgrimage from La Paz to Copacabana. Thousands of pilgrims walk the distance, a journey of about 2 days, as a sign of penance and sacrifice. Several thousand other believers arrive by car, bus, or other means of transportation for 3 days of processions, religious rites, and sermons ending on Easter Sunday. One of Copacabana's most important sites is the Basilica of Our Lady of Copacabana, a monumental baroque church built on the site of the original 16th century sanctuary to the Virgin of Copacabana, the patron saint of Bolivia revered especially by Aymara believers. The image of the Virgin has indigenous facial features, evident in a wooden sculpture crafted by Francisco Tito Yupanqui (grandson of the Inca Tupac Yupanqui). Cerro Calvario, the hill rising above Copacabana, is another major religious site, with its Stations of the Cross where pilgrims arrive to pile rocks at each station—each rock represents one sin.

**Ecuador:** Ecuadorians celebrate Semana Santa with ritualistic processions, music, and food. Quito, the capital city, has a huge procession on Good Friday dedicated to “Jesus del Gran Poder.” In the streets of the historic center, crowds gather to watch the faithful carry large heavy statues of Jesus and Virgin Mary encased in crystal urns and mounted on platforms that they hoist onto their shoulders. Men are dressed in purple hoods and robes, crowns of thorns, and wear chains around their ankles, all symbols of penance. The procession departs from the historic San Francisco Church and winds a route through the old city center.

Food provides a highlight of Holy Week and a dish known as fanesca occupies a central place at the dinner table of most families. Fanesca is a stew made especially for Lent – when meat is expressly prohibited – and consists of fish (usually bacalao, or salt cod), lentils, beans, corn, milk, eggs, and cheese. Other common ingredients are vegetables, peanuts, and various seasonings, and fried plantains as a topping. The preparation of the stew varies by family and region.

**Peru:** In Cusco, Peru, Holy Week includes a special meal with twelve dishes. Typically these include *agua de maiz* (a corn chowder), *sopa de lisas con tarwi* (a soup of *olluco* with the legume *tarwi*), squash soup, rich with fish, *tarwi* with rice, and desserts such as purple pudding (*mazamorra morada*), rice pudding, stewed peaches, *empanadas*, and *suspiros* (*meringues*). These plates commemorate the twelve apostles

**Guatemala:** During Holy Week there are slow, sorrowful processions in many Guatemalan towns. Large, heavy platforms carrying statues of Jesus and Mary are marched through the streets on the shoulders of the faithful. In Antigua, the whole city participates in the celebrations. Members of brotherhoods, dressed in purple-colored robes, carry floats bearing images of the Holy Virgin and Jesus on their shoulders. The floats are accompanied by marching

funeral bands. The processions parade the streets depicting the final days of Jesus. From Monday to Thursday, several processions take the same course traversing the town, often lasting for twelve hours.

In Antigua, and other Guatemalan cities, the people stay up late each night of Holy Week the people stay up late and make “carpets” or alfombras along the route of the next day’s procession. The carpets are made of colored sawdust sprinkled onto the ground through the cutouts in a stencil creating patterns and flower designs. They look like richly woven wool carpets and are as long as a city street. The next day, the processions walk along the carpets. Even though the beautiful alfombras that everyone worked so hard to complete, are destroyed by the feet of the participants in the procession, nobody cares, because they are part of the celebration.

**Mexico:** Although Holy Week in Mexico City is not as religiously oriented as in past years, it is still customary for people to dress up as Jesus, Mary, Judas, or the Romans (as in Jesus times) and meet in the plaza to reenact “The Passion”. On Saturday, at the end of Holy Week, towns in Mexico and other Latin American countries have a noisy demonstration. The people make a figure called Judas that is an effigy of a politician, an international villain, a corrupt community members, or someone who needs to be mocked. The figure is made of straw, rags, or papier-mâché and wired with dozens of firecrackers to which a match is lit as the climax of the gathering.

Many towns have candle-light processions at midnight before Easter Sunday. Easter morning is a time of joy celebrated with singing, dancing, and more firecrackers. For others is a day of quiet worship with serene music in the churches.

## Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi comes on the Thursday after the eighth Sunday after Easter, 60 days after Easter, and is a celebration of the Eucharist and the belief that the bread of communion is changed into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood. This feast is among the most prevalent celebrations in Latin America and has been celebrated all over the Andes since early colonial times. In different Spanish-speaking countries, Corpus Christi celebrations often have a local twist so inviting parish newcomers to share what they remember of this celebration can be an important moment for sharing cultures.

**Peru:** Corpus Christi is a national holiday in Peru with a vibrant traditional ceremony that offers an opportunity for faithful Catholics to be integrated around the Eucharist or Sacrament of the Table. The festivity is most prominent in Cuzco where the holiday mixes Catholic and Inca traditions and continues for a week. Thousands of people flock to the Plaza de Armas to view the spectacular processions that bring images of virgins and saints from fifteen parish churches to be displayed during the celebrations in the Cathedral of Cuzco. Members of the brotherhoods devoted to individual images carry the sacred statues accompanied by dancers in a variety of traditional and colorful costumes and are joined by marching musicians. The brothers wear unique costumes and often carry embroidered pictures, wax candles and standards. After the procession is complete, the statues of the saints return to the cathedral.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the celebration, everyone hears the ringing of María Angola from the Cathedral tower known as the Monumental Bell of South America, cast in 1655 and weighing 6

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<sup>3</sup> Publicado por Escaped to Latin America

tons and standing 2.1 meters tall. The ringing can be heard 18 to 20 miles away and provides a reminder that sound has a particular place in Andean society, where indigenous knowledge recognizes thunderclaps as expressions of power beyond human authority and the sighing of the wind or the gurgling of a stream carry meaning. The bell is also the subject of many stories and legends, both ancient and modern, woven by the imagination of the people and asking Peruvian visitors to recall the narratives that are familiar to them would be an interesting conversation topic.

Food has a major role in Peruvian celebrations of Corpus Christi. An emblematic dish called chiriuchu, considered the signature dish of Cuzco, is cooked and eaten on the night prior to the main day and at various other times. It includes Cuy (guinea pig) and up to 11 other different dishes, accompanied with corn beer or chicha. The origin of chiriuchu, which is translated as “chilly cold” or “spicy cold,” is the topic of many stories that explain each of the unique regional ingredients included in the dish. However, no one knows exactly where its preparation began.

**Mexico:** The Corpus Christ observance in Mexico, also known as Dias de las Mulas or Mulettas (Day of the Mules or Little Mules), centers around a solemn mass, where the faithful receive the Eucharist and reconfirm their connection with the body and blood of the Lord. From grand city cathedrals to rural mountain village churches, these special masses are attended by the whole family. Mexico’s special tradition includes giving gifts of small hand-made figurines of donkeys or mules to honor the presentation of flowers and fruit t by Indigenous groups that were carried on the backs of donkeys from towns across the nation. The figurines are made from dried leaves, corn, plantain, and, sometimes, even pasta, and decorated with foods symbolic of the

harvest, together with tiny pieces of black pottery. Mexicans buy mulettas to wear as pins on their clothing or larger ones to display at home.

Another Corpus Christi celebration is the Fiesta de los Manueles. The Mexican name, Manuel, is derived from the holy name ‘Emmanuel’, which means ‘God be with us’. And this popular and holy-related name is celebrated with small human figurines known as Manuelitos, crafted by local artisans and decorated in special clothing. Both the Mulettas and these Manuelitos hold a special place in Mexican religious culture.<sup>4</sup>

Symbolic dancing that reflects the blending of the Spanish and Indigenous traditions is part of the Corpus Christi celebration in Veracruz. Inviting the newcomers to the parish to share how their Mexican community celebrated Corpus Christi is one more opportunity to encourage cross-cultural communication within the parish. **Guatemala:** In Antigua preparations for Corpus Christi celebrations include setting up lovely flower displays on the ground along the route of the procession and watering them to keep them from wilting. There are food vendors who set up their stands as well with some dishes especially made for this day. Children also sometimes appear dressed as like angels.

The small town of San Lucas Tolimán prepares for the procession by decorating the streets with what they call “Alfombras” or carpets that run through the entire town. In front of each home, the family lays down elaborate designs that resembled mosaics of tropical flowers

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<sup>4</sup> <https://toursperegrinosmexico.com/index.php/en/blog-en/three-unique-ways-we-celebrate-corpus-christi-in-mexico.html>

using colored sawdust, banana leaves, pine needles, and local fruit and vegetables. After about three hours, the procession arrives in front of the 500-year-old church.

**Panama:** The traditional Panamanian religious processions of Corpus Christi, led by a cross and conducted in silence, have gradually been replaced by a parade of “dirty” and “clean” devils, who dance to the rhythm of a bell or castanets, and masquerade performances in which men dressed as bulls chase spectators around the streets. The “dirty” Devils, who represent evil, consist of about 15 men dressed in striped red-and-black suits and ugly brightly-painted masks with horns crowned with about 40 tall macaw feathers. The “clean” devils wear masks and costumes that have no decorations. The “dirty” and the “clean” devils, along with the masqueraders, who are men dressed as women, parade and dance through town. On the last day of the festival, they all come together in a procession where the “Great Devil” is defeated by the “clean” Devils, who force him out of the temple in an elaborate dramatic performance. This unique celebration (and the gender issues related to the masqueraders) offers many areas for fruitful conversation within the parish.

**El Día de los Muertos:** October. 31-November. 1

Day of the Dead, originally a Mexican celebration, has gained global attention since the Oscar winning animated film “Coco,” produced by Disney-Pixar, which narrates events of the festival. The event formally takes place on November 1 and November 2 and is focused on the souls of the dead (All Saints Day) and the souls of unbaptized children (All Souls Day). Just as many other holidays, both begin on the eve before. Traditionally, the celebration includes

building altars with sugar skulls and other foods, with pictures and other favorite items of the dead persons honored. Schools, businesses, local governments, and clubs all build altars. Food includes of the Day of the Dead bread and chocolate. In many cases, marigold flowers are spread along the sidewalk or path to guide the spirits to the altar. Many families visit the graves of loved ones and spend the night.

A strong element of humor pervades the celebrations. Satirical last wills and testaments circulate for politicians or prominent persons or others who violate social mores. Calaveras and skulls appear in bakeries or on street corners with the names of individuals. And small toy-like skeletons performing various occupations or recreations are also available for purchase to decorate altars and homes. Some neighborhoods also have processions, stopping at different houses to tell jokes about the persons who live there, that end at the parish church for day of the dead bread and chocolate.

#### Family and fiesta foods

Although a great deal has already been said about special foods specifically connected to the various feast days, there are other traditional foods from each country that might make up part of a shared culture “pot luck” supper to be shared by everyone in the parish. Although Americans appreciate Mexico tacos, enchiladas, and tamales, many other plates exist based on tortillas and corn dough and making them together could present an interesting event for anyone who enjoys cooking.

South American national dishes include some corn-based plates, but also other unique plates. In Venezuela and Colombia, arepas, a kind of corn product similar to tortillas but thicker, are usually filled with cheese or other ingredients..

Empanadas, which can be filled with cheese, meat, or fruit, are similar to turnovers. Perhaps best known in Argentina, they are common in many other places in South America.

Throughout Latin America, ceviche, which is fish cooked in citrus juice, is familiar as an appetizer or main course. Versions of ceviche are made with chili, or other spicy goods, tomato (Mexico), and other local goods. This would be an interesting dish to discuss and try various versions.

A potluck meal, with parish members, Hispanic and American, bringing their family specialty should result in a pleasant gathering and discussion of family, food, and sharing.

## 2. Piñatas

The first piñatas, shaped like a star with seven points representing the seven deadly sins, were introduced in Mexico by missionaries in 1586 to teach that with faith and virtue the individual can overcome sin and receive all the rewards of heaven. The blindfold, worn by the participants, represented faith and the stick, used to break the piñata, was the will to overcome sin. The piñata was filled with candies and other gifts to symbolize the riches that the virtuous who overcome sin will receive in the kingdom of heaven,

Piñatas are familiar in America today as an important part of birthday celebrations and other parties for children. People no longer considered the meaning behind the piñata. Piñatas, often star-shaped, do remain prominent in the celebration of the Posadas at Christmastime, but without references to the original symbolism.

## 3. Loteria

Loteria, often called Mexican or Latino Bingo, is a popular board game in many Hispanic communities. Including it in a parish “game night” could be a fun way to include children and adults in learning something about Latin American culture. The traditional game consists of 82 cards with pictures (and usually a number), the caller shuffles the deck and then calls out one at a time to the players who record correct images on their game cards with beans, or coins, or other small markers. To make calling the cards more challenging and fun for listeners, the person announcing the cards may use a rhyme or riddle for the image. For example, the caller often will announce “the blanket of the poor,” for the sun card. The game like bingo can be played different ways to determine the winner: the game can require a completed vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line, or the four corners or a completely covered game card.

The Loteria cards can also be used to tell stories, including the life of Christ, or Biblical narratives, using the cards with images of the dove, the rose, the lamb, the ladder, the candle, the soldier, the goblet, the wine, the cock, the deadly reaper. Beyond the traditional images, there are at least a hundred different sets of images—historical, popular characters, geographical, and more—that comprise community, historical, and regional versions. Many of these images appear on the internet. Once individuals are familiar with the standard game, parish members

might work out their own version of the images. Of course, the game can also be used to teach Spanish vocabulary.<sup>5</sup>

### Reaching the Hispanic Heritage and Migrant communities

The preceding pages have detailed a variety of things that Episcopal parishes might do to welcome members of the Hispanic heritage and migrant communities to their community. But any gathering has to start with an invitation. One possible way to initiate outreach to these communities might be posting advertisements of the planned event at local Hispanic grocery stores, restaurants, community centers, consular offices, on local Spanish-language radio and newspapers. Other places for announcements might be Hispanic soccer matches or flea markets. Choosing a place is also something to give thought to. Perhaps a popular Hispanic restaurant could be an interesting place to hold a gathering.

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Additional information on loteria is available in a chapter in William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006). The book is available in digital form from the University of Arizona library