

## **HISTORY OF “LAS POSADAS”**

“Las Posadas” are traditionally celebrated as a Christmas novena which recalls the plight of Joseph and Mary when they were unable to find lodging in Bethlehem as the birth of Jesus was at hand. “Las Posadas” signifies lodging and it was because of the decree by the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus that the Holy couple had traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

In 1578 an Augustinian missionary, Friar Diego de Soria, introduced this novena in the church of Acolman in Mexico. He did this to combat the Aztec custom of honoring their war god Huitzilopochtli, during the time of the year that corresponded with the Christmas season. His intention was to establish a Christian devotion which would honor the Holy Child and at the same time replace the pagan rite.

This ingenious friar could not have imagined, at the time, that his dedicated efforts would bear fruit and expand greatly over time. Today, over four hundred years later, “Las Posadas” are not only an established religious and cultural tradition in Mexico but in many other countries.

As this celebration of “Las Posadas” has expanded, it has produced a marked fervor and enthusiasm in the participants. There is no doubt that the good Friar Diego has given the Spanish speaking world an instrument for prayer which has served well to fill the spiritual emptiness which is evident during this time of Advent.

How do “Las Posadas” fit into this current world or ours? Today’s commercialism has become a fitting substitute for the pagan rites for Huitzilopochtli. It is only by simple faith, which is honest and firm, in the humble that still believe and remember Jesus at the time when he was a weak and indefensible baby that the Holy Spirit elevates to the sublime heights attained by “Las Posadas”. Let us pray that this celebration of love ignites the hearts of the participants with love for the Baby Jesus of Bethlehem.