

MEXICAN MUSIC: A CHRISTMAS TRADITION*

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Abstract

La posada is a Mexican Christmas tradition that young children from any culture will enjoy.

La posada is a Mexican Christmas tradition in which music plays an important part. Here is a traditional *posada* song to teach to young children. You may want to use it for:

- A social studies unit on Mexico or on Christmas traditions or religious celebrations from around the world.
- A children's music class, or children's Christmas concert, particularly one featuring music from different cultures.
- You may want to host your own *posada*, either as a school class or a group of families.

The tradition has variations, but here are the basics. On each of the nine days before Christmas, a procession of children and their families reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. The procession usually carries lit candles. Statues of Joseph leading a donkey carrying Mary may also be carried, or sometimes the children dress up as Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men, angels, etc. When they come to a house, the children and the people of the house sing the song of the *peregrinos* (pilgrims). In some places, the children may be rejected at a couple of houses first, but they always eventually arrive at a home where Mary and Joseph are recognized and welcomed in. In this house, where it has been prearranged to hold that night's *posada* party, the pilgrims enter, and everyone may spend some time together singing Christmas songs and praying (the rosary is probably the most popular *posada* prayer in this Catholic country). Finally, there is a party with a pinata full of treats for the children.

Notes on the Music

- You will find below three pages of music for a traditional *posada* song. You can copy the music in the figures if you like, but if you can open these PDF files, they will probably give you better copies. page 1¹page 2²page 3³
- The music (including the accompaniment and translation) was collected in Florence Botsford's *Folk Songs of Many Peoples*, published in 1922, and is therefore in the public domain.
- You can sing the original Spanish, or the singable translation by Muna Lee.

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¹See the file at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12609/latest/Pilgrims1.pdf>>

²See the file at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12609/latest/Pilgrims2.pdf>>

³See the file at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12609/latest/Pilgrims3a.pdf>>

- The song has three main parts. The first six verses should be alternated, with the pilgrims singing Joseph's verses, and the people of the house singing the innkeeper's verses. Everyone can sing the middle section together as the pilgrims are welcomed into the house. If you are going to include the tradition of praying together before the party, you may want to have the children wait to sing the last section when it is time to bring out the pinata.
- If you can't read music but would like to learn the tunes, this sound file⁴ has the music to one verse, followed immediately by the music to the second section, followed immediately by the music to one verse of the final section.

⁴See the file at <<http://cnx.org/content/m12609/latest/Pilgrims.MID>>

The Pilgrims

Traditional Mexican

Andante (a little slow)

Voice

In the name of heav - en, I ask you for
In nom - bre del cie - lo, Os pi - do po -

Piano

7

shel - - - ter, For my wife is tired, - - -
sa - - - da, Pues no pue - de an - - - dar

Pno.

13

She can go no far - - - - - ther.
Ya mi es - po - sa a - ma - - - - - da.

Pno.

Figure 1

The Pilgrims
poco piu mosso (a bit faster)

19 6. Come in, pil - grims, ho - ly pil - grims, ho - ly
En - tren, san - tos pe - re - gri - nos pe - re - lone of my poor dwel - ling my poor
mi po - bre mo - ra - da, mo -

22 1. pil - grims, In this nook take your part; Not a
gri - nos, A es - te hu - milde rin - con; No de
dwel - ling, but take al - so - of - my
ra - da, Si - no de mi co - ra -

25 2. Allegretto (faster)
Scat - ter the can - dles, scat - ter the sweets now,
Ech - en con - fi - tes y can - el - on - es
heart.
son.

Pno.

Figure 2

The Pilgrims 3

30

For all the chil - dren are wan - ting to eat now.
Para los mu - cha - chos que son co - mel - on - es.

Pno.

Los Peregrinos

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. En nombre del cielo,
Os pido posada,
Pues no puede andar
Ya mi esposa amada. | 4. Pues si es una Reina
Quién lo solicita,
¿Cómo es que de noche
Anda tan solita? |
| 2. Aquí no es mesón
Sigan adelante
Pues no vaya a ser
Algún tunante. | 5. Yo soy carpintero
De nombre José
Mi esposa es María
La Madre de Dios. |
| 3. Mi esposa es María
La Reina del Cielo
Os pido posada
Por solo una noche. | 6. Si eres tu José
Y tu esposa es María
Entren, peregrinos,
No los conocía. |

Entren, santos peregrinos, peregrinos,
A este humilde rincón
No de mi pobre morada, morada,
Sino de mi corazón.

Echen confites y canelones
Para los muchachos que son comelones.

Castaña asada, piña cubierta,
Denle de palos a los de la puerta.

Andale, Lola, no te dilates
Con la canasta de los cacahuates.

En esta posada nos hemos chasqueado
Porque la dueña nada nos ha dado.

The Pilgrims

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. In the name of heaven
I ask you for shelter,
For my wife is tired;
She can go no farther. | 4. Well, if she's so queenly,
She's not wished nor known here!
How is it at night
She goes forth alone here? |
| 2. I am no inn-keeper;
You two cannot stay here-
(Scoundrel he may be,
Who would make a fray here?) | 5. Carpenter you see me,
My name's Joseph, brother;
Mary is my wife;
She is God's own Mother. |
| 3. My wife is that Mary
Who is Queen of Heaven
Shelter you refuse
Just for one night, even? | 6. If your name is Joseph,
Mary there beside you,
You two we knew not;
Enter, good betide you! |

Come in pilgrims, holy pilgrims, holy pilgrims,
In this nook take your part:
Not alone of my poor dwelling, my poor dwelling,
But take also of my heart.

Scatter the candies, scatter the sweets now,
For all the children are longing to eat now.

Candied pineapple! Chestnuts well roasted!
Hit with a stick all those at the door posted!

Come on then, Lola! Hurry, we ask it!
Bring us the peanuts you have in the basket!

Here from this dwelling we'll go of sadly;
They've giv'n us nothing and treated us badly!

Figure 3

NOTE: Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey! It was very useful to me, both as a researcher and as an author, to get a better picture of my readers' goals and needs. I hope to begin updating the survey results module⁵ in April. I will also soon begin making some of the suggested additions, and emailed comments are still welcome as always.

⁵"A Survey of Users of Connexions Music Modules" <<http://cnx.org/content/m34234/latest/>>