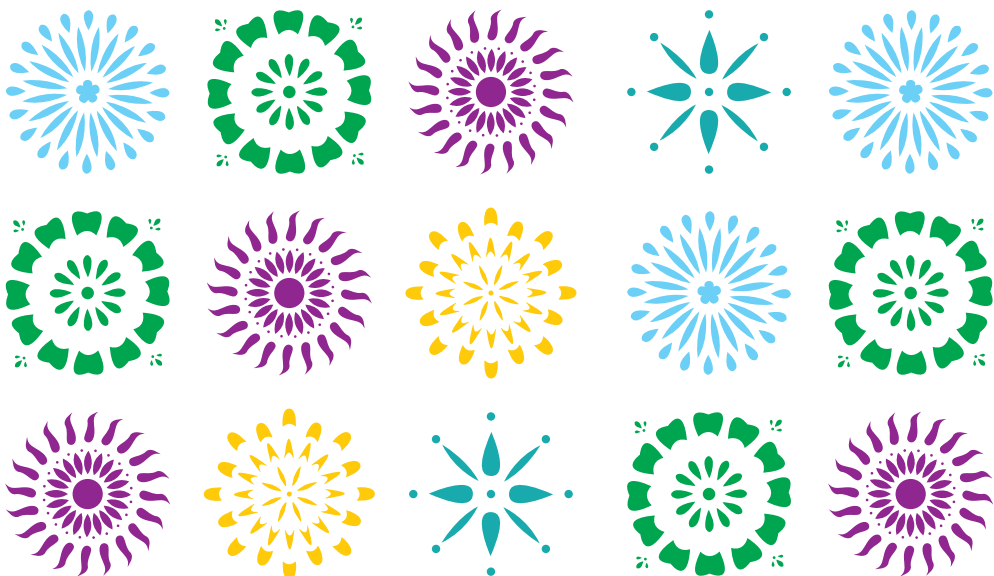


Las Posadas Navideñas

*A guide to celebrating the
Holy Family's journey*



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CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
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History of *Las Posadas Navideñas*

The gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us that Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem on the eve of Jesus' birth. When they were unable to find a place to sleep for the night, a kind innkeeper allowed the family to stay in his stable. It was there that Mary gave birth to Jesus, placing him in a crib fashioned for him out of a manger. They were soon to be visited by wise men and angels.

Las Posadas Navideñas—The Christmas Inns—is a nine-day religious observance meant to honor Mary and Joseph's quest for shelter. Every night from Dec. 16-24, neighbors gather to recreate the Holy Family's experience. They dress up, sing, pray and celebrate the coming anniversary of the Savior's birth.

Immigrants, in search of refuge, much like the Holy Family, brought this 400-year-old Latin American tradition to their new countries. CLINIC invites you to join in the celebration.

This resource provides lyrics to the song that is central to the ritual, as well as helpful tips for planning your own *Posadas*. Also included are modern-day stories of migrants whose struggles are reminiscent of those of the Holy Family.

For additional resources, including music and photos, visit: cliniclegal.org/posadas.

Nine Steps to a Successful “Posada”

1. Divide your participants into two groups, one will represent the Holy Family outside the home and the other represents the innkeeper inside the house.
2. Identify a clear walking path to the house or church that will serve as the “inn” for the night.
3. Decide how to characterize the Holy Family. Some people carry Nativity statuettes while others dress up as Joseph and Mary.
4. If hosting a *Posada* after sunset, consider using candles to lead your procession and light the way.
5. When you arrive at the inn’s door, sing the *Posadas* songs with spirit! Visit cliniclegal.org/posadas for further information on music.
6. After the song is completed, gather around the host family’s Nativity scene to pray the rosary.
7. As you pray, reflect on one of the nine stories in this booklet. Contemplate the similarities between the Holy Family and modern migrants.
8. Break out the food! Traditional dishes include *tamales*, a Mexican stew called *pozole* and crispy cookies known as *buñuelos*.
9. End the night with a piñata full of candy! Piñatas for *Posadas* are traditionally in the shape of a seven-pointed star.

Remember, these are just suggestions, not requirements. The goal of this ceremony is to commemorate the kindness shown to the Holy Family. As long as your gathering is full of love and kindness, you’ve had a successful *Posada*!

Most Posadas consist of two groups: one inside and one outside. To begin, Mary and Joseph knock on the door, which an innkeeper answers. Mary and Joseph lead the group outside in the first verse below.

Group One (Outside)

Verse 1

In the Name of the Lord
Please, provide us with lodging
My beloved wife
Cannot walk any farther

Verse 2

Don't be inhumane
Please have some compassion
Our Lord above
Will reward your action

Verse 3

Sir, we are so weary
Traveling straight from Nazareth
I am a simple carpenter
By the name of Joseph

Verse 4

Heaven's only queen
Is asking you for lodging
Please goodhearted landlord,
One night is all we need

Verse 5

My wife is Mary
She is the queen of heaven
And soon to be
Mother of the Savior

Verse 6:

[While entering the home]

Thank you, generous landlord
God reward your kindness
Tonight the skies are filled
With the greatest excitement

[Everyone together]

Please enter blessed migrants
Blessed migrants
Our home is your home
Although it's a simple dwelling
Simple dwelling
It holds love from all our souls

The group inside then sings their first verse, complaining of being disturbed. The groups continue to alternate verses one through six. Everyone sings together on the last verse.

Group Two (Inside)

Verse 1

Continue your journey
This is not a shelter
I will not open the door
Lest you be some villain

Verse 2

Please go somewhere else
And leave me be
I am growing angry
This night has no need for a
flogging

Verse 3

I care not for your name
Please let me sleep
I am exhausted
Into my house you will not creep

Verse 4

If she is a queen
Why is she at my doorstep?
How is she so alone
At an hour like this?

Verse 5

[While opening the door]

Oh! you are Joseph
And your wife is Mary
Enter, please, dear migrants
I did not realize

Verse 6

Honored is this house
To provide some lodging
For the holy virgin
Beautiful Mary

[Everyone together]

Please enter blessed migrants
Blessed migrants
Our home is your home
Although it's a simple dwelling
Simple dwelling
It holds love from all our souls

About the CLINIC Fellows Program and the Stories in this Booklet

The CLINIC Fellows Program was launched in 2015 to increase immigration-related outreach, education and legal services in the Southeast region of the United States. With an estimated 1.8 million undocumented immigrants in the region, there are only 158 immigration legal service providers, or one provider for every 11,582 undocumented immigrants. The initiative supports an additional full-time immigration legal representative at 12 programs in eight southeastern states. Funded by three donors, the CLINIC-run project also provides advocacy support, training and technical assistance to strengthen the quality and sustainability of the programs.

The following stories were contributed by clients whose lives have been changed by the legal services organizations participating in the CLINIC Fellows program. These stories are a very small window into the lives of the 6,000 people already assisted in the first year of the program.

Pseudonyms have been used to protect the subjects' identities. Use this resource to take note of the striking similarities between the Holy Family's ordeal and the issues that migrants face today. We ask that you keep them and their families in your thoughts and prayers this holiday season.

For more information on the program and to see where the fellows are located, visit cliniclegal.org/clinicfellows.

A story to share during your first Posada

Elena from Mexico

Elena's family moved to the United States from a small town outside of Mexico City when she was 7. They had few possessions, just a couple changes of clothes and a few hundred dollars. Knowing what her parents sacrificed to provide her and her siblings with a better life, Elena applied for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, as soon as she could. She knew it was her best chance to help her family.

Even though DACA allowed her to study psychology and Spanish at the University of Kentucky, Elena was not satisfied, knowing that others did not have the same opportunities. She decided to pursue a career that allows her to help her neighbors also find their footing in the U.S.

Elena became a volunteer at Maxwell Street Legal Clinic in Lexington, Kentucky. The staff describes her as an "all-star" with an enviable range of talents. Her dedication led her to become a part-time legal assistant with Maxwell Street and a law student at the University of Louisville, Kentucky.

Elena didn't arrive in Lexington under the most favorable circumstances, but those experiences haven't stopped her from achieving her dreams while helping the rest of her community do the same.



A story to share during your second Posada

Pedro from Guatemala

Pedro and his family were targeted in Guatemala because of his albinism, so they fled to the United States for safety. When Pedro and his wife were released from detention, they were told to expect a letter in the mail letting them know when their court dates were. His wife received her letter, but Pedro never received his.

During an Immigration and Customs Enforcement appointment for his wife, Pedro asked about his case because he still had not received his letter. They were shocked to learn Pedro had a pending deportation order because he missed his court date. ICE had been mailing his notices to the wrong address!

Luckily, ICE allowed Pedro time to get an attorney. Most immigration attorneys did not want to take asylum cases, but Redlands Christian Migrants Association, in Immokalee, Florida, stepped up. Its employees went with Pedro to all of his ICE appointments and helped get him a six-month extension for his deportation order. This gave Redlands Christian Migrants Association time to reopen and submit his case. Even though the organization is still working on his behalf, Pedro is thrilled to no longer live in fear of being deported. He now has peace of mind, knowing the staff will do everything possible to help him and his family.



A story to share during your third Posada

Thuan from Vietnam

Thuan heard about the free English language classes offered by Catholic Charities in Biloxi, Mississippi, and began attending regularly. At the time, her English skills were very limited. Originally from Vietnam, her immigration was sponsored by her U.S. citizen husband. They have a young son together.

Thuan's husband was abusive. He kept her confined to their home and threatened to kill her. She eventually escaped from and divorced her abuser. Catholic Charities staff members were moved by her story. They became her advocates, going to court with her and helping her get full custody of her young son. They also encouraged her to become a U.S. citizen, enrolled her in preparation classes and helped her file her citizenship application.

Thuan was very determined to become a citizen, so she studied hard. Even though she got lost on her way to her naturalization interview, her hard work paid off and she passed the interview!

Overjoyed, Thuan immediately called her advocates at Catholic Charities to share her good news. Several staff members, including Thuan's ESL teacher, attended her naturalization oath ceremony a few months later.





A story to share during your fourth Posada

Alberto and Carlos from Honduras

Alberto and Carlos' father, a Honduran police officer, was murdered by gang members. Other police officers worried about retaliation, so they never looked into his death. They did encourage Alberto and Carlos' mother to leave the country, warning that she, too, could be killed. Their mother made the hard decision to flee to the U.S., and left the boys with their grandmother.

The boys and their grandmother tried to hide from the gang members. But the gangs continued to find them. Finally, their mother couldn't take it anymore and sent for them to come to the United States. Alberto and Carlos made the long journey across half of Central America and Mexico alone.

They were detained at the border, but eventually placed in the care of Catholic Charities Atlanta. Catholic Charities reconnected the boys with their mom and provided additional services to the family, including helping them receive political asylum.

Before they could send for the grandmother, her body was found locked inside a burned-out shed. Alberto and Carlos' mother still tears up when she talks about their grandmother, but she is thankful for her family's fresh start in the U.S.





A story to share during your fifth Posada

Valentina from Grenada

Valentina and her children came to the United States from Grenada in 2007 to escape her abusive husband. She knew they deserved a better life. A few years later, she remarried and had her fourth child. But her new husband also became abusive. She loved her family and believed they could work it out, so they tried therapy. Unfortunately, she realized she and her children were in another dangerous situation.

Valentina sought help at Hispanic Services Council in Tampa, Florida. They used the Violence Against Women Act to obtain green cards for Valentina and her children. The process was nearly seamless because they had a lot of evidence of the abuse.

Since receiving her permanent residency, Valentina accomplished her childhood dream of becoming a nurse. She became a licensed practical nurse in December 2015 and is studying to become a registered nurse. Valentina's daughter is following her mother's hardworking footsteps and is now attending the University of Florida on a full scholarship.



A story to share during your sixth Posada

Miguel from El Salvador

Miguel left El Salvador to protect his family from the gang violence plaguing his community. After 18 years in the U.S., he talked with an immigration attorney to see if he qualified for a lawful immigration status like his wife. Years earlier, she had become a permanent resident through her father. The attorney told him he needed an expensive waiver and would have to return to his home country for a few years first. He decided against that option because he could not leave his family.

A case worker for Catholic Charities - Diocese of Raleigh in North Carolina, learned of Miguel's situation when he applied for food assistance. The case worker referred him to Catholic Charities' immigration specialists. Soon they advised him that he was eligible to apply for advance parole to visit the family members he had left behind in El Salvador.

Miguel's application for advance parole was approved and he was able to spend a week with his family in El Salvador. After he re-entered the U.S. using his advance parole, the Raleigh Catholic Charities staff is now helping him with his application for permanent residency. Eventually, he plans to apply for citizenship, then petition for his parents to join him in the United States.



A story to share during your seventh Posada

Farm laborers from Central America

When recruiters from an agricultural company approached some farmworkers with the opportunity to work in the U.S. legally, five of them eagerly paid for the necessary visas and plane tickets. They did not know, however, that these were expenses the company should have been covering.

More lies were exposed when they arrived at the farm. The housing they were promised was an overcrowded trailer with no running water or toilet. They were forced to work overtime and paid half of what they were promised. The company also took their immigration documents away and told them that they could not leave the property or the police would catch them and deport them. The men lived under close supervision, afraid to leave without their papers and reminded of the “debt” they owed the company for bringing them to the United States.

Finally, the men had had enough and they made their escape. Too scared to return to their countries, they contacted Catholic Charities Atlanta for help. An attorney represented them in their applications for T Visas, which are for victims of human trafficking. Today, all five men and their families are safely living in the U.S., away from the horror of the fields.





A story to share during your eighth Posada


Mario from Guatemala

Traveling to a new country as an unaccompanied minor was a lonely process, but Mario found some comfort in Forest, Mississippi. The town has a large indigenous population and Mario, a Guatemalan Mam speaker, fit right in.

One day, he was hanging out with his friends when he was suddenly attacked in his home. He suffered many injuries and complications, but Mario fought to survive. He also talked to the police about the attack.

Catholic Charities – Jackson, in Mississippi, was already working on Mario's asylum case. The program director quickly realized Mario's attack made him eligible for a U-Visa. Catholic Charities obtained certified evidence of the crime from the Forest Police Department to strengthen his U-Visa application. They also helped him apply for compensation from the Mississippi Crime Victims' Compensation Fund, which paid his medical bills. Now, Mario and the Catholic Charities staff eagerly await the results of his application.

When Mario came to the U.S. from Guatemala, he did not think he would experience violence first hand, but he is grateful to have the help of Catholic Charities during such a difficult time.





A story to share during your ninth Posada

Laura from Mexico

After living in the U. S. for 14 years, Laura was suddenly at risk for deportation because she was undocumented. Laura's first attorney was expensive and did not give detailed updates on her case. The attorney quit, forcing Laura to go to court alone.

She stood nervously before the judge, unaware her first attorney had already submitted her application for permanent residence. The judge approved the application and canceled her deportation order. A very relieved and thankful Laura left the courthouse that day.

Three years later, Laura still believed she was undocumented and wasted \$6,000 on another attorney to try to figure out her situation. The attorney took her money but did not help improve her immigration status. Feeling lost and disappointed, she contacted Catholic Charities – Jacksonville in Jacksonville, Florida, and brought them the only legal document she had—her canceled deportation order. In just a few hours, Catholic Charities resolved Laura's situation with an immigration officer. Laura received her green card two months later.

After years of living in fear and spending thousands of dollars on careless attorneys, Laura was happy that someone finally treated her situation with the attention and importance it deserved.

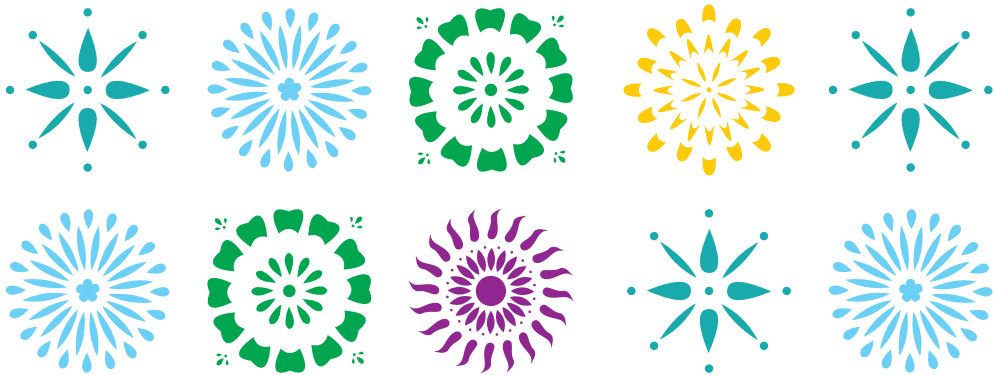


About the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. draws on an unparalleled network to empower communities to welcome immigrants. Relying on our proven expertise, we employ innovative programs and lead advocacy efforts rooted in faith. Established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1988 as a legally independent 501(c)(3), CLINIC knows that families, communities and this country are made stronger when immigrants are integrated into society. We believe in the promotion of human dignity, preservation of family unity and the protection of the most vulnerable. To put our beliefs into practice, we provide expert legal training and program management support and services to more than 300 charitable immigration legal programs nationwide. CLINIC also provides legal representation to dioceses and religious congregations as well as their international priests; sisters, brothers and other religious workers who serve Catholics and immigrants in the United States.

In 2015, more than 6,600 people participated in CLINIC trainings, both in-person and online. Each time CLINIC trains and mentors an affiliate staff member as a legal representative, that person uses his or her knowledge of immigration law to assist thousands of immigrants each year. Through the legal help of CLINIC's network, hundreds of thousands of immigrants gain hope. Families are reunited. Our cities and neighborhoods gain new members who are working to become integrated as U.S. citizens.

To find out more or to donate to the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., visit: cliniclegal.org/donate.



Las Posadas Navideñas are a series of festive ceremonies that commemorate Mary and Joseph's arrival in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve.

This booklet provides suggestions for how to host your own *Posada*, as well as nine stories highlighting the struggles of migrants today. These heartwarming stories call for us to welcome today's immigrants just as the innkeeper did for the Holy Family on that fateful night.

For additional resources, including music and photos, visit: cliniclegal.org/posadas.

