



As the season of Christmas envelops us in its warmth and splendor, I am reminded of the profound sense of brotherhood and faith that binds us together in our cherished fraternity. This time of year, rich in spiritual significance, calls us to reflect upon the birth of Christ and the values He embodied, which are also the pillars of our noble order: charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

During this holy season, let us embrace the spirit of charity, extending our hands and hearts to those in need, reflecting the boundless love and generosity that Christ showed to all. May our unity be strengthened as we gather with family and friends, celebrating the joyous birth of our Savior and renewing our commitment to our faith and community.

Let us also take a moment to appreciate the bond of fraternity that makes the Knights of Columbus a beacon of hope and support for so many. Our collective efforts, grounded in our faith and love for our fellow man, truly embody the message of Christmas.

This Christmas, may the light of Christ's love shine brightly in your life, illuminating every moment with peace, joy, and hope. May the Holy Family of Nazareth inspire you with their faith and courage, guiding you through life's journey with wisdom and grace.

Also, as we honor our commitment to patriotism, let us pray for peace and goodwill in our nation and around the world, remembering the message of the angels on that first Christmas night.

There are many Faith Programs that your council can participate in. Consider supporting a Featured Program where you'll receive two credits for participation. For additional information on Faith Programs refer to the **2023-2024 California State Programs Handbook** or visit kofc.org/faith.

The Faith Programs Team wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with God's richest blessings.

God bless.

Jerry Fong
Faith Programs Chairman
California State Council
Knights of Columbus

DOING MORE FAITH IN ACTION PROGRAMS WILL BRING MORE CATHOLIC MEN TO THE FOLD.

..."TOGETHER WE CAN DO GREAT THINGS" - St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Brother Knights,

As we enter the Advent Season, there are three beautiful cultural events which will be taking place in next few weeks. Each of these events compliments our Church teachings and brings us together as a Catholic family. More, there is an opportunity for the Knights of Columbus to participate directly with our parishes and take our place as a family organization with our parish community.

I am highlighting three significant upcoming celebrations; **Our Lady of Guadalupe** (December 12th), **Simbang Gabi** (December 15th-24th), and **Posadas** (December 16th-24th). There is a brief description of each one below and their significance to the various cultures and to our Church. If your Chapter or Councils are directly involved with any of these events, please capture some photos and email to me so we can post and note our continuous support to our parishes.



Our Lady of Guadalupe, as many know, The Virgin of Guadalupe refers to when the Virgin Mary, appeared before Saint Juan Diego in Mexico in 1531. She holds a special place in the culture and religious life of many Catholics throughout the United State, Mexico, and many countries. Also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe, Spanish Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Day or Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, on December 12, draws millions of Catholics every year from across Mexico and other countries to pay pilgrimage to see an image of Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe. It is the site of her apparitions to Juan Diego Cuauhtlatatz in 1531, now the most visited Catholic site in the world. Guadalupe's famous image, a brown-skinned woman in a starry blue mantle, hands folded in prayer, is cherished in Mexico. She is a remarkable part of believers' daily lives — in their homes, churches, prayers, and community life. The day has been declared a national holiday in Mexico. On this day, people from all parts of Mexico make their way to Mexico's religious center at the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe. This is a northern neighborhood of Mexico City where they celebrate the Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe with a mass ceremony and a fair in her honor.

Indeed there will be many celebrations taking place at many parishes in the United States and worldwide. Our parishes carved out special masses for this special day. We will see Mariachis playing music and Aztec dancers throughout this special day. We as Knights should be at the center of such celebrations. As Members of the Knights of Columbus, let's take a strong active role at our parishes for this special celebration. Meet with your local parish priest and offer your Chapter or Council's assistance in the planning of the upcoming celebrations. Yes, we can do traffic control. But we can do much more with our direct participation in the overall program.



Simbang Gabi, a cherished Filipino Christmas tradition, holds a special place in the hearts of Filipino-Americans and Filipino world wide. Often called the “Misa de Gallo” or “Rooster’s Mass,” it is a series of dawn masses leading up to Christmas Eve. This spiritual pilgrimage is more than just attending church services; it’s an integral part of Filipino culture, fostering community, faith, and joy during the holiday season. For Filipino-Americans and Filipinos around the world, this spiritual pilgrimage is a meaningful part of their Christmas festivities.

Understanding the Tradition

Simbang Gabi typically begins on December 16 and culminates on December 24. Some Churches are adorned with colorful lights and lanterns, creating a festive atmosphere. Obviously, the overall celebration of colors depends on the participation of each parish. This is where the Knights of Columbus can step in and encourage colorfulness for the event by having direct participation with the upcoming event with the pastor of the church. And because of our direct involvement with the parishes, The Knights of Columbus can have a direct impact on the celebration in the planning and execution of this special celebration.

Cultural Significance

Participating in Simbang Gabi isn’t solely a religious observance; it’s also a way to connect with family roots. It symbolizes devotion, gratitude, and the anticipation of welcoming the birth of Jesus Christ. Though some churches here locally may observe a one day of celebrations, others will participate with nine days of dawn Masses honor the Blessed Virgin Mary which serves as a spiritual preparation for Christmas.

Faith and Reflection

Simbang Gabi encourages personal reflection and spiritual growth. As we know as Brother Knights, attending the Masses is a way to deepen one’s faith and seek blessings for intentions and prayers. Simbang Gabi is a beautiful embodiment of **faith, tradition, and community spirit** in Filipino culture. At the end, some parishes will ring the church bells at dawn, marking the celebration of togetherness, faith, and the anticipation of Christmas. Regardless of one’s culture, all Councils with the Knights of Columbus can participate in this beautiful celebration during the Christmas season.

(cebudailynews.net contribute source of article)



Las Posadas, a cherished tradition for Latin American and Hispanic communities is celebrated from **December 16th** to **December 24th** globally. The nine-day celebration portrays Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem in search of shelter, highlighting the virtues of unity, hospitality, and faith. Throughout these nine days, communities come together for nightly celebrations

that enact the Nativity story, weaving together a rich assortment of customs and memories that last for generations.

A popular and colorful lead-up to Christmas, Las Posadas is a world of enchantment enhanced by food, music, and communal holiday cheer. **Origin of Las Posadas** With roots in Mexican colonial history, Las Posadas evolved over centuries into the beloved tradition that it is today. The earliest attempts at evangelization in the Americas by Spanish missionaries are the source of the tradition. The word "posada" directly translates to "inn" or "lodging" in Spanish due to the tradition of reenacting Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

It is believed that the Augustinian friars of San Agustin de Acolman organized the first-ever Posadas near Mexico City. Pope Sixtus V granted Friar Diego de Soria, an Augustinian prior, a papal bull in 1586 allowing him to celebrate "Misas de Aguinaldo," or "Christmas bonus masses," from December 16 to December 24. The celebrations initially began in the church but as the popularity of the festival grew, it moved to haciendas, then to respective homes, and eventually evolved into what it is today during the 19th century. **The Significance of Las Posadas:** Las Posadas serves both social and religious purposes as it commemorates and retells the story of Jesus's birth while simultaneously establishing a feeling of unity in the community. This celebration highlights the themes of hospitality, hope, and faith, and everyone who participates gets to see the Holy Family's journey. (www.calendarr.com source of information)

Brothers, thank you for your time and attention to this important message.

God's Blessings and Merry Christmas

Edward M. Castillo

Chairman, Cultural Devotional Practices

programs@californiaknights.org

Faith-in-Action@CaliforniaKnights.org