



### Important Notes

Students do have written Spanish homework over break (a Christmas crossword puzzle) and should also mark their oral home practice on their week 7/8 tracker slip. We will have a Quarter 2 test on January 10<sup>th</sup> revisiting classroom objects, numbers, plural words, location and Puerto Rico. As a result, it is important to keep practicing vocabulary from past study guides. Teacher information: Señora (Heather) Ragen. I only teach on Tuesdays, so please contact me via e-mail at [hragen@stpaulgenesee.net](mailto:hragen@stpaulgenesee.net) or on my cell phone (414-881-9586) if you have any questions.

### Class Activities

After our quiz today we spent time discussing Christmas celebrations in the Spanish-speaking world, with a special focus on Three Kings' Day. See below for more information on cultural celebrations. We also learned some Christmas vocabulary in Spanish and listened to some samples of music from Puerto Rico.

¡Feliz Navidad! Happy Christmas to all and a blessed start to the New Year! - Señora Ragen

## Christmas Celebrations

### Las Posadas

Every December from the 16<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> many people in Mexico have parties called *Posadas*. Neighbors are led through streets by an Angel (a small child in costume). Other children dressed as Mary and Joseph walk along with adults singing carols and carrying candles. When they reach the designated house, one group goes inside to play the innkeepers and the other group stays outside to beg for shelter, reenacting the journey of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. When the innkeepers finally invite the travelers into the *Posada* (shelter), a big fiesta begins. Refreshments, music and piñatas are typically part of the celebration each night.



### Nochebuena

Literally, *Nochebuena* means "good night." It is the Spanish term for Christmas Eve. Many families observe the tradition of attending a midnight mass called *Misa del gallo* (Mass of the rooster) to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

### Three Kings' Day

This festival is called Little Christmas in some European countries. In most Spanish-speaking countries it is called *Three Kings' Day*, or the *Twelfth Night*. You have probably heard about the three kings, or wise men (Melchor, Gaspar, and Baltasar) who followed the star to find the Christ child, Jesus. Some people believe they reached Bethlehem when Jesus was 12 days old – on January 6<sup>th</sup> with gifts to honor the newborn king. Long ago, children in Spain and southern Europe began to think the Three Kings brought their Christmas gifts too. That is how the custom of giving and receiving holiday presents in January came about. Traditions vary from region to region, but in many places, children leave their shoes on a window ledge or doorstep on the night of January 5<sup>th</sup>. A basin of water and some hay might be left for the weary horses/camels of the Three Kings. On the morning of January 6<sup>th</sup> the water and hay are gone. The children's shoes are filled with candies, fruits and little toys if they are well behaved (coal if they are naughty). On the afternoon of January 6<sup>th</sup>, many families gather to eat *Cake of the Magi*, or Three Kings Cake. The cake is shaped like a ring to look like a crown. It is topped with candied cherries and pineapple to look like jewels. The cake also has surprises baked inside. They could be shiny coins, tiny dolls or other small gifts. The first grown-up to receive a piece of cake with a gift inside must host the Three Kings party the following year.



### Other traditions

There are few Christmas trees in private homes; much more common is the *nacimiento*, nativity scene (also called *Belén* or *pesebre*). Customs vary from country to country and region to region. Singing Christmas carols or *villancicos* is popular. In Puerto Rico children dress as Wise Men and groups of carolers called *parrandas* go from house to house singing traditional songs. In some parts of Colombia Christmas traditions include floating huge, paper-covered balloons. Costa Rican nativity scenes are decorated with orchids. Teenagers in Caracas Venezuela go roller skating after midnight and then head to church where a special mass is said for them. Celebrations in Peru include bullfights. The common theme found in all of these celebrations is special time taken with family and friends to honor and rejoice in the birth of Jesus.

