

## Prayer Update

### Mexican Christmas Traditions

Mexicans have their Christmas traditions just as Americans do and just as almost every other culture with any kind of Christian heritage does. Here are a few that we've noticed over the few years that we've lived here in La Poza. We suspect some are universal in Mexico and some may be specific to this region only.

- The traditional Christmas Eve meal is tamales. The dough for the tamales is made from corn flour (masa harina). Then chicken or pork is cooked with a certain (non-spicy) pepper. The masa is then spread on a corn husk and the meat is placed on the masa. Then it is all rolled up in the corn husk. Other parts of Mexico (most notably the state of Vera Cruz) use banana leaves instead of corn husks. The whole thing is then steamed for about a half an hour. Some people eat them straight. Some prefer to spice them up a bit with some nice hot salsa.
- We haven't noticed a lot of 'gift-giving' among adults. Usually the gifts are given to the children. Santa Claus (Papá Noel or San Nicolás) is part of the tradition but since there aren't too many chimneys, we haven't figured out how he's supposed to sneak into the house.
- The word *posada* literally means 'inn' (like the inn where Joseph and Mary found no room). In Mexico the word *posada* is also used to describe an Advent celebration that is observed each year. This is a Roman Catholic practice that seems to have become part of the tradition/culture in Mexico. When we've asked various Mexican Catholics the purpose or meaning of the celebration they don't seem to have a clue. For 9 days before Christmas there is a nightly processional to various homes in the community. The icon of the baby Jesus is taken in the processional to the various homes. The first night the processional begins at the church and proceeds to a home where the family is asked if they can keep the statue of the baby Jesus. It is supposedly an honor to have the processional come to your home. The processional goes through a series of songs, chants, dances, etc. once they arrive at the home. The next night the processional returns to that home and takes the baby Jesus to another home and the whole tradition is repeated. This ritual continues throughout the 9 days. On the final night the statue is returned to the church from where it started. Connected with this tradition is a heavy emphasis on the Virgin Mary. The exaltation of Mary is central in much of the Roman Catholic dogma.
- They also seem to use the term *posada* in a more generic sense as well. For example, the traditional Christmas party that the local school has each year is called the *posada*.
- We do our best to use these opportunities to show forth the true meaning of Christmas. For example, we've engaged friends on the meaning of the Christmas *posada* and in so doing describe for them what the Scripture teaches about Christ's incarnation. We've also distributed gifts bags to all the children at the school *posada*. These bags include among other things a copy of the Scripture. We appreciate one of our supporting churches preparing these gifts for us to distribute this year.

### Praises & Prayer Requests

- As we begin a new year we always reflect back on how the ministry has progressed as well as evaluating how we should proceed in the future. Our desire remains the same—to see a fully functioning local church that is led by Mexicans. Please pray that if there are better or more effective means to approach this task that we will be sensitive to the direction and leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Rejoice with us in how God has blessed the ministry here in 2008. We believe that we have seen genuine conversions among several folks and initial steps of obedience to Christ's commands in their lives since those conversions.
- Continue to pray in particular that we will see men who will be converted who could be trained for leadership.

### A Few Changes for 2009

- Most of those who have supported us financially in the past have received letters concerning a change in where our donations will be sent in the future. The pastors of our sending church have asked that we be released from To Every Tribe Ministries in order to come under the direct care

of our local church. While our relationship with TETM will come to an end, we pray for God's continued blessing on their ministry. As we look to the future, we are excited about the direct accountability we will have to the leadership of the church that we have been so closely associated with for almost 20 years. Financial support will be handled by Christian Missionary Clearinghouse (CMC) in Houston, TX. CMC is not a mission board but rather simply a service agency whose only function is to receive, receipt, and distribute support to missionaries worldwide. They have been doing this since 1974 and are very experienced in what they do. If you're interested in donating, please contact us and we'll be glad to send more information. Our email address will be changing from [steve@toeverytribe.com](mailto:steve@toeverytribe.com) to [shenry@christscovenant.org](mailto:shenry@christscovenant.org). Future Prayer Updates will be coming from [shenry@christscovenant.org](mailto:shenry@christscovenant.org) so if you have a spam filter that needs updating on your email program, please let it know not to direct emails from that address to your junk folder. Because we send these Prayer Updates out via bulk email, they sometimes end up there if email programs aren't updated. While the To Every Tribe address will remain active for a little while longer during the transition, we would ask you to update your address books now and begin directing your emails to us at the new address.

Thanks so much for your prayer and financial support in 2008. We're looking forward to even greater things in the coming year.

Yours for the Sake of the Gospel,

Steve & Robin