

*An Advent Resource from ST MARYS CF10
to accompany Las Posadas*



A Safe Lodging

REFLECTIONS ON THE BETHLEHEM
JOURNEY OF MARY AND JOSEPH

A Safe Lodging

ST MARYS CF10

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Las Posadas

The Lodging

Las Posadas is a festive nine-day celebration with origins in Spain and Latin America, beginning on December 16 and ending on Christmas Eve.

A vibrant affair with colour and costumes, drama and song, food and fun and pinatas, it celebrates the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem as they seek a place to lodge. 'Posada' is Spanish for 'lodging' or 'accommodation.' Children play the parts of some of the characters, and there may be a real donkey involved too!

The nine day 'novena' represents the nine months of pregnancy and also expresses the change in focus of our Advent devotions from December 17 onwards.

The tradition has increasingly been adapted in the UK although possibly with less flair! Here, it is popular for a Las Posadas figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary who carries Jesus within her womb, alongside Joseph, and an accompanying donkey,

to be passed from home to home,
or it can visit schools, community groups
and places of work,
providing hospitality to this travelling family.

This devotional activity also provides a means
of offering hospitality to one another.

If such an image isn't available
many churches simply use the Nativity Scene figures.
It can also be replicated at home,
the figures moved each day
to a different part of the home
until they reach the Crib on Christmas Eve.

This resource provides some reflective material
as we contemplate this journey.

Whilst there is no detailed gospel account of the journey,
here we have re-imagined it,
coloured by some of the places
through which Mary and Joseph may have passed
from Nazareth in the north to Bethlehem in the south,
a few hours beyond Jerusalem.

The nine reflections provide material
for each of the nine days of the novena,
which we hope may enrich
your preparations for Christmas.



Prayers of Welcome and Hospitality

The following is a simple time of prayer, welcome and hospitality, suitable for all ages as the Las Posadas image is passed from person to person. The new host welcomes the person/people carrying the image of Mary and Joseph into their home. The one presenting the image says:

May Mary's son and Saviour
bring joy and peace to this home.

Blessed be God for ever!

The Las Posadas image is either placed near a crib scene, or perhaps on a windowsill or in another place of prominence. The following prayer may be used:

God our Father,
as we gaze on the image of Mary and Joseph
making their way to Bethlehem,
help us to be warm and friendly
and share the love of Jesus
with the waiting world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:
Our Father....

**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

Before leaving the home:

**May this home be aglow with the Spirit
and filled with the joy of Jesus.
May Christ be born in our hearts and in our lives.**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Chris
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all ever more. Amen.**



In Real Life

An angel of the Lord appeared
to him in a dream and said,
“Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife,
for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will bear a son,
and you are to name him Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.”

Matthew 1: 18-23

There are times when we dream,
and the dreams are so vivid,
so weird or well-remembered,
so fascinating
that we find ourselves
sharing them with someone,
and we discover that putting into words
something that happened
in our unconscious mind
makes no sense at all
in real life.

Joseph's encounter with the angel
is in his sleeping moments,
beyond his closed eye lids,
deep in his dreams,
as his unconscious mind
pulls together the conversations
and encounters of the day,
expresses his fears in fascinating,
unworldly ways.

An angel speaks

He draws,
from the deep wellspring of his faith,
a prophet's words,
so familiar to him,
the fabric of his life.

The vision in the dark
Within his dreams,
illuminates the way ahead,
gives an insight into God's design
for him,
for Mary,
for the world

in real life.

The journey is on.

Prayer

Loving Father,
Mary's first three months of pregnancy
were spent far from home
as she attended to Elizabeth in her need,
leaving Joseph to his dreams.
Help us to be alert to your presence in our lives
and to respond to your designs for us,
with loving obedience and joy.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Rubble of Shiloh

Now the Lord came and stood there,
calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!”
And Samuel said,
“Speak, for your servant is listening.

1 Samuel 3:1-10

They pass the place of Shiloh,
its rubble a reminder of broken promises
and short-lived saviours.

The place where Hannah prays,
and which becomes the stomping ground of Samuel,
his destiny played out before he was born,
to peck at the heels of Eli in the sanctuary.

Here, the Tabernacle took its time
for three centuries and more,
a home for the Ark of the Covenant.
It is here, as Eli sleeps in the deepest hours of the night
that Samuel hears God speaking,
unrecognisable at first,
patient,
persistent.

The song of Samuel's mother is, for Mary,
such a distant memory now.
She has travelled so far
in such a short time,
as they move through the landscape of Israel,
pass through past moments
which define them.

Shiloh.
That place of tranquillity
toppled and fragile

in an unfriendly world,
a giant's stone's throw from Jerusalem's walls.

Mary feels the kicks from within,
the movement in her womb,
the patience
and promise
of God.

She remembers God speaking
through the message of an angel,
the angel who left her
some time ago now,
as she kicks her way through the rubble of life,
listening for a voice in the darkness,
feeling the brightness
grow within her.

Prayer

Loving Father,
as we contemplate the coming of Jesus into the world,
help us to listen to your voice calling to us
above the din of day,
in the silence of the night,
beyond the busyness of life,
or deep within those calm, still moments.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Estd: 1930
Please order your food
from the counter

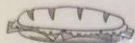
WE ARE OPEN
MON - SAT 7AM - 4:30PM
SUNDAY'S 8AM - 4PM
Open All Bank Holidays

SANDWICHES, ROLLS (Inc Toasties)

	Sandwiches	Rolls	Baguette
Bacon	£3.50	£3.80	£4.00
Sausage		£3.80	£4.00
Egg (V)		£3.80	£4.00
Ham		£3.80	£4.00
Cheese (V)		£3.80	£4.00
Halloumi (V)		£4.00	£4.00
Avocado & Egg (V)		£4.00	£5.00
Bacon & Egg		£4.00	£4.80
Bacon & Sausage		£4.00	£4.80
Bacon & Onion		£4.00	£4.80
Bacon & Cheese		£4.00	£4.80
Sausage & Onion		£4.00	£4.80
Cheese & Tomato (V)		£4.00	£4.80
Cheese & Onion (V)		£4.00	£4.80
Cheese & Ham		£4.00	£4.80
Ham & Tomato		£4.00	£4.80
Ham Salad		£4.00	£4.80
Sausage & Egg		£4.00	£4.80
Bacon, Egg & M		£4.00	£4.80
BLT		£4.00	£4.80
Breakfast		£4.00	£4.80
Tuna Mayo		£4.00	£4.80

PANINIS

Served with Salad and Chips



Cheese	£6.90	Tomato, Olives	£6.90
Bacon & Cheddar Cheese	£6.90	Halloumi	£6.90
Ham & Cheese	£6.90	Chicken	£6.90
Tomato, Mushroom Cheese	£6.90	Tuna & Cheese	£6.90
Tuna & Cheese	£6.90	Ham & Mushroom	£6.90
Ham & Mushroom	£6.90	Chicken Cheese	£6.90
Chicken Cheese	£6.90	Sausage Egg	£6.90
Sausage Egg	£6.90		

JACKET P

Served with Salad

Plain (V)	£5.50
Cheese	£6.50
Chicken	£6.50
Ham	£6.50
Tomato	£6.50
Mushroom	£6.50
Tuna	£6.50
Sausage	£6.50



App
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- Coffee
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Bottles



The Gate of Heaven

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,
“Surely the LORD is in this place—
and I did not know it!”
And he was afraid, and said,
“How awesome is this place!
This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gate of heaven.”

Genesis 28:15-17

This border town of Bethel,
the Gate of Heaven,
the House of God,
straddles the tribal lands
of Benjamin and Manasseh,
along the fault line of disagreement and tension,
pulled back and forth through time.

This stop-off place
where Abram pitched his tent
and stayed the night,
and marked his way with altars
on which he poured out prayers to God.

Where Jacob dreamed of angels,
stirring him from sleep,
his stone pillow turned into an altar,
his prayers set in stone
at the gateway of heaven.

They talk of dreams
and border towns.
They walk the border now,
stepping in and out of time,
across the tribes of Israel.
They look for angels.

Prayer

God of all the ages,
in each generation you call and set apart
your holy ones to reveal the life of your kingdom,
and give us a glimpse of heaven.

May our vision of the everyday
be transformed by your grace and your love,
so that we may see your all-powerful hand
in all you have made.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



David's City

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered.
"He is tending the sheep."
Samuel said, "Send for him;
we will not sit down until he arrives."
So he sent for him and had him brought in.
He was glowing with health
and had a fine appearance and handsome features.
Then the LORD said,
"Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

1 Samuel 16: 11-12

They move close to the city of dreams
where, long ago,
the runt of a family
the baby of a band of brothers,
hidden away, unseen, among the sheep
is plucked from his backwater singing.

His brothers are paraded out,
one by one
on the catwalk of a parent's aspirations,
hoping to bring pride to the family
but not one of them
fits the shoes of a king,
until David takes centre stage.

Mary walks by his side,
this descendant of David,
born of a kingly line.
The people wait for a new monarch to emerge
in this occupied land
where soldiers kick the dust
and strut their stuff.

The hand of history is upon their shoulders.
Joseph takes pride in his past
but has little to show for it
in property or prestige.

The child kicks and moves
in his mother's womb.

Mary's smile breaks through the pain of the journey.

She remembers how she sang then
back in Judah,
hidden among the hills.
plucked as she was from her backwater singing.

Prayer

God our Father,
King of all you have made,
may we seek you out in the lost and the little,
the undervalued and overlooked.
As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ,
who fulfils your promises,
disturbs our dreams
pulls down the powerful from their thrones,
and gives grace to the poor and displaced,
may your justice take shape in our lives
and lead us in the way of peace.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Tears of Rachel

When Rachel was in her hard labour,
the midwife said to her,
“Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son.”
As her soul was departing (for she died),
she named him Ben-oni
but his father called him Benjamin.
So Rachel died,
and she was buried on the way to Ephrath
(that is, Bethlehem),
and Jacob set up a pillar at her grave;

Genesis 35:16-20

Carrying her unborn child,
her sights set on Bethlehem,
the voice and tears of Rachel
resounds somewhere in her heart.

Rachel who died at Bethlehem's border,
died in childbirth,
her tomb a place of pilgrimage
on the north side of the city,
a backdrop to Mary's Bethlehem sojourn.

Before her last breath,
Rachel names her child
'Son of my mourning.'
This is Benjamin to be,
over protected by a father marked by grief,
the youngest brother of the dreamer Joseph.

Dreamers
run
through this
family line.

With the dangers of pregnancy
alive in Mary's mind,
she is filled with fear.

Yes, the plans of God
are planted in her heart,

the angel's message
'Do not be afraid'
is breathed with every breath,
a litany of calm
to speak into the darkness

but the ideal time to travel has passed.

She recalls again the first journey she made with Jesus,
the one she made with haste
on the heels of an angel's message
upwards to the hill country of Judah,
where Elizabeth cries with joy.

Tears are shed along this way too,
as tiredness takes its toll.

There will be more tears to come.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of Mary, and Son of God,
whether we shed tears of grief or joy
may we discern your presence,
which calms our fears and leads us in the way of peace,
for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.



Comparing Angels

David danced before the LORD
with all his might;
David was girded with a linen ephod.
So David and all the house of Israel
brought up the ark of the LORD
with shouting,
and with the sound of the trumpet.

2 Samuel 6:14

History repeats itself,
gives the backdrop to all that we do,
interprets the present,
makes us nostalgic for a past
that perhaps never existed.

They are on the Bethlehem way,
where kings are born,
unexpectedly.

A king,
adorned in priestly clothes,
who danced before the Ark of the Covenant,
the presence of God boxed up,
enshrined beneath the cherubim.

There are songs and stringed instruments,
the sound of cymbals,
the clap of castanets and tambourines,
a trumpet blast.

Mary and Joseph sing along the way.
There is rhythm to their life.
Each step a note.
They sing songs of the past.
Childhood favourites,
nostalgic for the past.

Joseph dances in Mary's path,
makes her laugh.

And then
he breaks the silence
that came from a night's dream.

They compare angels.
There are no trumpet sounds.

Prayer

We rejoice, Lord God, in your greatness.
May we perceive your presence
in all you have made,
hear you speaking
through the prophets and holy ones,
and raise our voices in song
at all you are doing in the world today.
As we prepare for our celebration
of Christ's birth in Bethlehem
may we welcome him afresh into our lives
as King and Lord and Saviour.
Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.



The Temple

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Micah 5:2

Taking the Bethlehem bound journey
from the backwater of Nazareth
takes 31 hours.

A 145 km trudge
through the Tribes of Israel,
a four or five day walk.

Each Territory through which they pass
is a constant call back to the past,
to the building of a Kingdom.

Four of five times,
the sun rises and falls
across their journey,
sealing each day's walk.

Towards their journey's end,
they touch the Temple walls of Jerusalem,
the place of God's dwelling.

They promise to return,
cast a handful of grain
towards two pigeons
who peck at their feet.

Mary tries to make sense of this presence
beyond the Temple walls
but can only find momentum to her thoughts
by moving on,
two hours more,
to the city of David,
the fruitful Ephratah

waiting to bloom again.

Prayer

Lord God,
you chose Mary as the Tabernacle of your love,
the dwelling place of your Word made flesh.
May Christ be born in our hearts this day,
so that bearing him in our lives,
we will be continuously transformed,
a living shrine of holiness and love,
giving constant praise and glory to you,
our loving Father.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Fields of Barley

Naomi returned from Moab
accompanied by Ruth the Moabite,
her daughter-in-law,
arriving in Bethlehem
as the barley harvest was beginning.

Ruth 1:22

They stop to eat,
buy bread or meat along the Bethlehem way.
Joseph descends into descendant talk,
tells the stories of his family line
which line the story of Israel's life.

"In a valley to the east of Bethlehem
lay a field of gleaming barley from which, back in the day,
Boaz made his wage,' he says, 'my 28th time grandfather.

"Famine stripped the land then,
drove Elimelech, his closest kin, and Naomi his wife
from their hometown.
For a decade they dwelt deep in a foreign land,
in a place that would swallow his own dead body
leaving two sons to settle into their sojourn,
to find a better life,
far away from Bethlehem's broken barley fields.

"They marry Moabite women
who soon are left widowed.
As famine ends, Naomi sends their wives back
to their own mothers' homes.
Ruth refuses to leave.

"'Where you go, I will go,' she says.
'I will live with you and call your people my own,
and your God, my God.
Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.'

“Bethlehem brings them home,
and the barley fields of Boaz bring Ruth in search of food.

He gives her barley from the bundles of his field,
fills the arms of this foreigner with food.

One day she will become his wife
and he will be her husband,
Their son will become the father of Jesse
who will become the father of David
who will take his first breath
across Bethlehem’s fields of barley.”

They bite into the bread they have bought,
set their sights on the fields of Bethlehem,
the House of Bread.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the Living Bread
which has come down from heaven,
fulfilling our hunger,
meeting our needs.
May our Christmas celebrations
reveal your presence in the world today
so that all may be gathered into the harvest of your love,
for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.



The Lodging

While they were there,
the time came for her to deliver her child.
And she gave birth to her firstborn son
and wrapped him in bands of cloth,
and laid him in a manger,
because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7

It was, for Joseph,
a home from home,
a five-day journey
back to the longer days of his childhood,
so long ago now.

They take their place among the beasts,
with the breaths and heavy movements,
as they scrape for straw.
Steam rises from their backs and head.
Their gentle sleeping groans and grunts
do not disturb.

Within the cave walls of this home,
carved within the earth,
God takes a breath,
his small lungs
making his presence known.
Slippery, wet,
his eyes only able to focus
on the shape of his mother
who feeds him,
wraps him tightly in bands of cloth,
smothers him in love.

This runt of a God,
this shepherd king,
unseen, unknown,

though even now a star is rising.
somewhere in the east
And, across the hills of Bethlehem,
beyond the barley fields
and the resting place of Rachel
who once wet the earth with her tears,
the sky begins to brighten
the dark night of the shepherds watch,
as God
makes his home
among us.

Prayer

We rejoice, Lord God Almighty,
in the beauty of this season!
Christ's birth in Bethlehem
is serenaded by the song of the angels,
their joy brightening the deep
and darkest point of the night.
His first cries stir the deep
and sonorous sounds of the cattle,
with whom he shares his first breath,
and whose feeding trough becomes his cradle.
Help us perceive Christ's presence in our world today,
to be attentive to voice
and true to his name,
for he is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord, support us all the day long
of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen,
and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.
Then, Lord, in thy mercy,
grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest,
and peace at the last. Amen

Prayer of St John Henry Newman

'I too am mortal like everyone else,
a descendant of the first man formed from the earth.'
**Lord Jesus, Son of Adam and Son of David,
have mercy on us.**

'I was modelled in flesh inside a mother's womb,
where in blood I acquired substance.'
**Jesus, Son of David and Son of Mary,
have mercy on us**

'I, too, when I was born drew in the common air,
I fell on the same ground that bears us all,
and crying was the first sound I made, like everyone else.'
**Lord Jesus, Son of Mary and Son of God,
have mercy on us.**

'I was nurtured in swaddling clothes, with every care.
No other king has known any other beginning of existence;
for there is only one way into life, and one way out of it.'
**Lord Jesus, Word made flesh and splendour of the Father,
have mercy on us.**

'And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in
swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' (*Luke 2: 12*)

Litany based on Wisdom 7:1-6

Acknowledgements

Scripture verses are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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