

Advent Traditions Around the World



The Netherlands: St. Nicholas Day

DECEMBER 6

On December 5, the eve of the feast of Saint Nicholas, Dutch children put out their shoes, hoping that the saint will leave gifts for them during the night. This tradition is based on the story of St. Nicholas helping a man who could not afford dowries for his three daughters. In order to prevent the daughters from being sold into slavery, St. Nicholas tossed bags of gold into the man's house, and the gold landed in the stockings of the three girls.



Colombia: "Little Candles Day"

SUNDOWN OF DECEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 8

In preparation for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, people place candles and paper lanterns outside their homes. They also host processions, fireworks displays, and other events in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This celebration began in 1854 in anticipation of the promulgation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX. Traditionally, Columbians eat buñuelos, sweet fried dough fritters, on this day.



Mexico: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

DECEMBER 12

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of Mexico's most important celebrations of the year. Over two million pilgrims flock to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City to honor Our Lady, who appeared to Saint Juan Diego in 1531 and whose miraculous image is preserved on the saint's tilma, or cloak. The feast day festivities include processions and dances performed by native peoples in traditional native garb. There are also many Masses celebrated in the basilica throughout the day.



Latin America: Las Posadas

DECEMBER 16-24

For nine days, a couple dressed as Mary and Joseph travel to a different house each night. The houses which represent the inn ("la posada") where the Holy Family sought lodging before the birth of Jesus Christ. At each house, the residents receive the pilgrims and sing a song, and often the group gathers to pray the Rosary around a Nativity scene.



Poland: Wigilia

DECEMBER 24

Following a day of fasting and abstinence, Polish families gather on Christmas Eve for a traditional meal. The meal is often comprised of twelve meatless dishes—one for each of the Twelve Apostles. The family says grace before the meal and breaks the opłatek, a traditional Christmas wafer made of unleavened bread. After the meal, the family exchanges gifts and attends Midnight Mass.