

¡Fiesta!

Celebrations at San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio, Texas

Introduction

Rev. David Garcia, Rector, San Fernando Cathedral

In 1731, sixteen families from the Spanish Canary Islands arrived at the presidio near the Mission of San Antonio de Valero, to begin the first permanent civic settlement in what is now the state of Texas. The village was called San Fernando after the thirteenth century King of Spain and the church eventually took the same name. Over the years San Fernando grew from a small parish church to become a dynamic cathedral in one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country. It witnessed the change of governments from Spain to Mexico to the Republic of Texas to the United States, then to the Confederate States and finally back to the United States. It was involved in many historic events from the Battle of the Alamo to the visit of Pope John Paul II.

San Fernando has always been a place where people celebrated the unique beauty of their culture and heritage. When they were often not accepted by the wider society they knew they could always be themselves and be at home at San Fernando. The beautiful and colorful rites within the cathedral often spilled outside onto the streets and plazas of the historic center of the city.

This video is a taste of what and how San Fernando celebrates during the course of the liturgical year. It is truly something special! We hope that this will inspire and encourage others to create and imagine liturgies and rituals that will express the beauty of who they are within the greatest traditions of our Church.

Through 267 years San Fernando Cathedral has always maintained a very Hispanic identity. It has been the refuge for many Hispanics when they were discriminated against and marginalized by the general society, when they lost political, economic and social power in the community, and as the whole area began to change. So San Fernando is a place where Hispanics can come and feel at home, can be themselves, and where their identities were respected and their traditions were revered. But our ministry goes beyond the Cathedral building itself

During high holy days and celebrations we transform the streets and plazas of San Antonio into one great church. We do our traditions, our processions, our ceremonies and our dramas in the streets for everyone to see. We do the best we can to present an authentic tradition of who we are, and to revere and respect our people, and let them present what is inside their hearts, and what has been part of their history and tradition for all of these centuries.

Study Guide

by Thomas A. Kane

CELEBRATING THE YEAR

We begin the liturgical year with Advent and the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with three days of preparation. The evening before we celebrate La Serenata, an evening service where groups of singers and entertainers serenade *la Virgen*. During the day of the feast there are a variety of Eucharistic services in the Church and outside the Cathedral. In the plazas the festival continues with indigenous singers and dancers just as you would see in Mexico. In the evening there is an outdoor procession and crowning of Our Lady. La Grand Posada is the Cathedral's gift to the city. We begin in a park, making our way through the historical district stopping at the Mercado, the old Spanish governor's palace, City Hall, county court house, and finally to the Cathedral where Mary and Joseph are welcomed into the community.

The feast of Epiphany is the traditional day for exchange of gifts. The Presentation of the Lord, or la Candalaria, is the traditional end of the Christmas Season with the blessing of the candles and the Christ Child, and the Leventada, the lifting up of the Christ Child from the Nativity scene and putting the infant away for another year.

The Season of Lent is celebrated with great solemnity, culminating in Holy Week. On Palm Sunday all of the palm processions take place in the plazas around the Cathedral and then into the Cathedral itself involving the characters who will be in the Passion drama on Good Friday. The whole idea of Holy Week is walking. We begin the walk with Jesus through the great mysteries of our faith, his passion, death and resurrection. We invite the people to make the entire week a drama inviting their participation, their entry into the Passion. We ask them to put their body into it. On Holy Thursday Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. Archbishop Flores joins the Cathedral staff in washing the feet of our community. The Good Friday drama begins with the Agony in the Garden on Thursday night. We begin Good Friday with an ecumenical prayer service in the Mercado followed by the Good Friday drama which begins with the condemnation of Jesus by Pilate. Jesus then picks up his cross and begins the Way of the Cross through the streets of San Antonio. Thousands of people follow Jesus. In front of the Cathedral and main plaza Jesus is crucified. This is a dramatic moment, a deep moment. The people are all very moved.

We then enter the cathedral for the Seven Last Words Service in which there are seven reflections on Christ's words from the Cross. The second word "behold your mother" is presented as a Flamenco dance. The Seven Last Words is followed by the Liturgy of Good Friday. In the evening there is the celebration of Pesame, the wake and burial of Jesus. This beautiful and moving ceremony is not found in the Church books, but in the popular religion. It is about all the losses in our life. It is the vigil of Mary, sorrowful over the death of her son. It

involves the procession with the crucified body of Jesus, the anointing of the body with oil, and placing flowers over his body. On Easter we celebrate the Vigil. We renew our baptismal vows and affirm our belief in the risen Lord. Our celebration continues with an outdoor picnic with the families.

We celebrate Mexican Independence Day in September with much color. People dressed in the costumes of the regions of Mexico and Hispanic America for the entrance procession for this festive day.

We celebrate the Feast of All Souls and All saints with an altar of the dead. We create an Altar of the Dead in front of the main altar in which we put the mementos of the dead: pictures of our deceased relatives, friends, well known ancestors, Tejano people, Mexican Americans who have a special meaning for our community. These are our unofficial saints. We present new names of people who have died recently that we feel should be lifted up as models for the community. This is to remind us that the saints live among us, and the Communion of Saints is very much a reality in our own lives.

We end the liturgical year with an interfaith celebration of Thanksgiving in which we bring together various faith traditions including Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions together with various ethnic and regional groups, the indigenous people, to show the unity of why we give thanks to God on this day. We give thanks for blessings God has given us, for the gift of life, the fact that we are all different, but yet somehow have all come together to this country and we all live together as a community.

Popular Religion and the Liturgy

By Jake Empereur, S. J.

As we come to the end of the twentieth century, one characterized by that singular religious event of the Second Vatican Council, we can celebrate with a sense of accomplishment the implementation of the reform of the liturgy promoted by the modern liturgical movement. What lies ahead in the next century will be more difficult, namely allowing the basic gospel message to find a home in the many cultures of this planet. Fortunately, this work has already begun in several places on this earth.

The official liturgy has been passed on to contemporary Christians by the tradition. But the mere repetition of this tradition is not enough to have a living liturgy. Liturgy is like a flower and it needs a garden in which to grow. As the whole church is challenged to move in the direction of permitting the message of Christ to take root and then grow and flourish in a variety of gardens, where can it look for models of what this process of inculturation should be? One of these models is Hispanic popular religion.

As this video so beautifully demonstrates, Hispanic popular religion is more than an incidental part of the spirituality of this people. Rather it is at the core of their religious faith. As viewers see how the whole liturgical year of the church is accompanied, enhanced and adorned by the Hispanic year of popular rites, they will need no further proof that popular religion is an indispensable part of being a Latino Christian. But what exactly is this popular religion?

Writers on popular religion emphasize that the word, popular, does not simply mean that these practices are widespread, although in fact they usually are. Rather, popular refers to the "people" (El Pueblo). These religious symbols and practices were created by the people, were passed from generation to generation by the people (in particular the grandmothers) and are sustained today by the people. Often these people were and are those who have been marginalized by the dominant culture in Latino and American societies.

Arturo Perez has listed some of the characteristics of this Hispanic popular religion. It takes place in the family, usually an extended family. It acknowledges the importance of women since the grandmothers pass the tradition on to the young who continue the practices. Mary plays a central role. It is embodied worship. This means that it is more than musical which it certainly is. It involves all the five senses, in particular the sense of touch. Latino popular religion is both a challenge to as well as a problem for the liturgy of the church. The challenge for the rest of the church is to find a garden, like the Hispanic one, in which the flower of the liturgy can grow. The problem is how to integrate present popular religious practices in the official liturgy to that they mutually support each other and are not seen as antagonistic.

It is not the point of this video to take literally the practices from the tape and try to apply them to situations outside the Hispanic context. It is rather to experience how one group of Christians have enlivened their worship so that worship does really become the source of their spirituality. For instance, as the viewers watch how the liturgical year is colored by these practices of popular religion, they can grasp the mood of the way that part of the year is celebrated. Then they can ask themselves what they can do to create a similar mood in a very

different circumstance. Liturgy and popular religion need each other.

Religion Popular y la Liturgia

By Jake Empereur, S. J.

Como llegamos al final del vigésimo siglo, un caracterizado por aquel evento singular religioso del Segundo Concilio Vaticano, podemos celebrar con un sentido de cumplimiento la aplicación de la reforma de la liturgia promovida por el movimiento moderno litúrgico. Lo que está adelante en el siglo próximo será más difícil saber, esto es, dejar que el mensaje del evangelio básico encuentre un hogar en las muchas culturas de este planeta. Afortunadamente, este trabajo ya ha empezado en varios lugares en esta tierra. La liturgia oficial se les ha pasado a Cristianos contemporáneos a través de la tradición. Pero la mera repetición de esta tradición no es suficiente para tener una liturgia viviente. La liturgia es como una flor y necesita un jardín en el que pueda crecer. Así como la iglesia entera es desafiada de ponerse en marcha de permitir que el mensaje de Cristo tome raíces y después crezca y florezca en una variedad de jardines. ¿Donde pueda buscar modelos de lo que debe ser este proceso de inculturación? Uno de estos modelos es la religión hispana popular.

Así como demuestra este video tan bellamente, la religión hispana popular es más que una parte accidental de la espiritualidad de este pueblo. Más bien, es el centro de su fe religiosa. Así como los espectadores observan de qué modo el año litúrgico entero de la iglesia se acompaña, se mejora y se adorna por el año hispano de ritos populares, no necesitarán alguna prueba más de que la religión popular es parte indispensable de ser un Latino Cristiano. ¿Para qué es exactamente esta religión popular?

Los escritores en religión popular dan énfasis a que la palabra, popular, no significa simplemente que estas prácticas estén extendidas, aunque de hecho normalmente están. Más bien popular se refiere al pueblo. Estos símbolos y prácticas religiosas que fueron creados por el pueblo, se pasaron de generación a generación por el pueblo (en particular, por las abuelas) y se sostienen hoy por el pueblo. A menudo este pueblo fueron y son aquellas personas que han sido marginadas por la cultura dominante de la sociedad de Latina y Nortamericana.

Arturo Perez ha hecho una lista de algunas de las características de esta religión hispana popular. Se produce en la familia, normalmente una familia extendida. Reconoce la importancia de mujeres ya que las abuelas pasan la tradición a los jóvenes que continúan las prácticas. María actúa un papel central. Es adoración encarnada. Esta encarnación significa algo más que musical, desde luego que es. Envuelve todos los cinco sentidos, en particular el sentido del tacto. La religión Latina popular es tanto un desafío como un problema para la liturgia de la iglesia. El desafío para el resto de la iglesia es encontrar un jardín, semejante al hispano, en el que la flor de la liturgia se pueda desarrollar. El problema es de qué modo integrar las costumbres populares religiosas del presente en la liturgia oficial de manera que mutuamente sostengan la una a la otra y no se vean como antagónicas.

No es el punto de este video tomar literalmente las prácticas de la cinta y aplicarlas a situaciones fuera del contexto hispano. Es más bien experimentar cómo un grupo de Cristianos han encarnado su culto de manera que el culto se vuelva verdaderamente la fuente de su espiritualidad. Por ejemplo, así como los espectadores ven como el año litúrgico toma color por

estas costumbres de religión popular, pueden entender el ambiente de la manera se celebra esa parte del año. Entonces pueden preguntarse que pueden hacer para crear un ambiente similar en circunstancias muy diferentes. La liturgia y la religión popular requieren de la una la otra.