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Dec. 1, 2006
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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON TO CELEBRATE "LAS POSADAS," COLORFUL MEXICAN HOLIDAY TRADITION, ON DEC. 6

DAYTON, Ohio – University of Dayton students, faculty and staff will celebrate Las Posadas, a joyous Mexican holiday tradition, at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

The celebration commemorates Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter. Participants will travel to three locations on campus, beginning at 57 Woodland Ave., a Marianist student community. The group then will proceed to the lobby of Marianist Hall and then to 312 Stonemill Rd. The closing celebration with food and piñatas will take place at the McGinnis Center, 301 Lowes St.

Four angels accompany Mary and Joseph as they start the procession. Pilgrims follow the two, holding lit candles and requesting lodging (*posada*) for the family at three different houses. Typically, pilgrims request lodging through traditional song, but UD participants will recite the request. At the first two houses the innkeepers refuse lodging, but at the third house the innkeeper recognizes Mary and Joseph and grants them shelter, initiating a joyous celebration.

The group of guests enters the home and kneels around the Nativity scene to pray. The singing of traditional Christmas songs follows, and a festive party with food, music, treats and a piñata concludes the celebration.

Marianist novice Luis Gamboa and UD's Latino student community worked with the rector's office to plan the UD celebration of Las Posadas.

The tradition of Las Posadas dates to the 16th century, when St. Ignatius Loyola used an Aztec festival to teach people about the birth of Christ. He also wanted to replace the nine-day celebration of the birth of the Aztec Sun god with a Christian celebration, which was typically celebrated in church. The celebration then moved into the community, where each family in a neighborhood schedules a night for the Posada to be held at their home.

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For media interviews, contact **Luis Gamboa** at 937-426-5721 or **Joan McGuinness Wagner**, director of Marianist strategies, at 937-229-3094.

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