

## Los Tres Reyes/Magos

In Latin America, people celebrate Christmas as a day for spending with family and reflecting on Christ, not a day for presents. For the children of Latin America, el Día de los Reyes, or day of the Kings, is a day when people give and receive presents, in honor of the three kings (or three mages, as some bible translations say). On this day, the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, there are parades that rival Macy's Thanksgiving and Christmas parades and families have special foods to celebrate the day. One of the most loved foods is the Rascón de Reyes. This bread is a type sweet bread, baked into a circle to represent the kings' crowns, and topped with sugar and jellied fruit. In Mexico, they put a small white figure of a baby into the bread, and people who get the 'baby Jesus' make the food for the family's Easter celebrations.



In Spain, el Día de Reyes is the most important part of Christmas vacations. A month before, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, the 'concello', or city council, goes around distribute blue 'buzones', or mailboxes, where children place the cards they've written to the Reyes Magos. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, there's a big parade on Main Street in most towns, where the Tres Reyes come on a procession. Sometimes they're on camels, sometimes on floats, depending on how big the parade is. It's also very important that every child has their favorite Rey: Melchor, the white-haired king that brings gold, Caspar, the red-haired king that brings frankincense, or Balthazar, the black-haired (and normally black-skinned) king that brings myrrh. Everyone then goes home to either open presents that night or the next day. January 6<sup>th</sup> is spent

with family and food, relaxing and opening the special gifts that the three kings brought.



Because of the emphasis on presents with the three Reyes, shopping for presents continues up until January 6<sup>th</sup>, not just for St. Nick on December 25<sup>th</sup>. There is the normal present-giving between family, co-workers, and friends, but then instead of just one person bringing children presents, each child gets a gift from each of the three kings. It's more common to find children going to the three kings in stores than them going to Santa Claus.

## Preguntas

1. What do people celebrate on January 6<sup>th</sup>? (Not the name of the day)
2. Why do they celebrate?
3. Why is the day bigger for most communities than Christmas?
4. What does the little white figure in the “Rascón de Reyes” represent?
5. Why do people give presents on this day instead of Christmas?

