

THE NATIVITY SCENE

This is one of the most popular traditions in Spain. The origin of the custom is in sculptures and paintings that had been in temples and churches for a long time to explain the meaning of Christmas to the layman. It seems that the tradition was born in the 13th century, when on Christmas Eve, 1223, St Francis of Assisi set up a live representation of the birth of Jesus Christ in a cave.

The Nativity scene was so successful that the idea spread throughout Italy and arrived in Spain in the 18th century, brought by the King. In a nativity scene we find the major figures in the story of Jesus' birth and also the Three Wise Men, who bring gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby.



A MIRACLE FOR CHRISTMAS

Once upon a time, there were two brothers, Juan and Lucas, who were looking forward to the moment when they could set up the nativity scene with their family, as they had been doing since they were little children. Christmas Eve finally arrived and they started to unpack the boxes where they keep the beautiful figures year after year. They had almost finished setting up all the figures in the right position when Lucas realised that the figure which represents Saint Joseph was missing. Where could that be? They looked for it everywhere, in all the boxes and even had a look in the bin where they had thrown the wrapping paper... but with no luck. St Joseph wasn't there. The kids were very sad because that meant they were not going to be able to have the complete nativity scene for the first time in their lives.

They felt like they didn't feel like celebrating anything and they even lay the table reluctantly, only because their dad had told them to do so. Everything should be ready to welcome their aunts and uncles and cousins but the kids were unhappy. When their favourite uncle arrived, he immediately noticed something was wrong, because the kids didn't pay attention to the bag of presents which he usually brings for Christmas under his arm. What's going on here? he asked. Lucas couldn't wait anymore and sobbing and sighing he told his uncle about the nativity scene. Surprised but very seriously, their uncle replied, "Well, I have a solution to that problem", and very slowly took one of the presents in the bag and carefully unwrapped it. What a miracle! Juan said, staring at a beautiful figure of St Joseph in the hands of his uncle. He smiled at him and said, "This is Christmas time, dear. Miracles happen sometimes". Everyone was happy then and the kids put the last figure in the nativity scene.

