

*The San Joaquin Fiesta is one of the prized manifestations of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Belize. NICH and community members are committed to ensuring its continuity and success.*

to the saint. San Joaquin primary school was established that same year. The first teachers were: Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Juanita Alcoser and Bernaldina Monima later Mr. Ignacio Martinez.

*The Fiesta at 50*

In Bacalar, Quintana Roo, Mexico the feast of San Joaquin



is celebrated on August 16. Many Belizeans, especially from the North traveled to Bacalar for this celebration. In seeing the number of families that were attending the Feast of San Joaquin in Bacalar, Mrs. Maria Angelita Magaña thought on the idea that our village, which bears the name of San Joaquin, can celebrate the feast day in our own church. She mentioned her idea to members of the community, who supported her in making it a reality. With the help of young people and members of the village, Mrs. Magaña raised funds to buy one large image of San Joaquin. She founded the fiesta which is celebrated by our Church in August 1967.

The first fiesta was inaugurated by the Honorable George C. Price. This celebration was held at the primary school in San Joaquin. In 1969, it was moved to the new Park grounds of San Joaquin, which was more spacious and close to the new Catholic Church. Today in the year 2016 we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our annual Fiesta. It begins with the Novenas to our Patron Saint

on August 8th. On the 8th of August a group of youths organized by Mrs. Magaña run a marathon with a torch from Bacalar to San Joaquin. The runners arrive just before the first novena begins. From the torch they light the veladoras for the first novena.

Many believers visit the Church to attend mass on August 16 and many of the visitors come to venerate San Joaquin. Visitors come from all the districts of Belize and some from Chetumal, Mexico. After the Novena and the Mass, the park is filled with a fiesta atmosphere. There are mechanical games that come from Mexico and Guatemala, food, street vendors, stalls that come with many new fancy things each year, and the dancehall. Friends who haven't seen each other for years meet at the fiesta.

Our Church has been built with the profits gained at the fiesta. The Church's annual maintenance is done with the fiesta funds. Contributions have also been made to the school, the Village Council, sick people and groups in the community. San Joaquin is grateful to all the brothers, sisters and friends that visit us each year to celebrate our patron saint day. With their visits that are highly appreciated, we make the Fiesta of San Joaquin.

**What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?**

*Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) or "Living Heritage" encompasses many traditions, practices and customs. They are the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.*

*¡Que viva la Fiesta de San Joaquin! ¡Que viva nuestro patrimonio cultural!*

# The San Joaquin Catholic Church and Community

CELEBRATING OUR



ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAN JOAQUIN FIESTA



*This brochure was sponsored by the National Institute of Culture and History/NICH, in collaboration with the San Joaquin Catholic Church Fiesta Committee, the San Joaquin Community, and countless individuals who have contributed to making 50 years of Fiesta a success.*

*The San Joaquin Fiesta will be included in the inventory of Belize's Cultural Celebrations.*

Images courtesy of: Mrs. Maria Angelita Magana, San Joaquin Catholic Church Fiesta Committee, Institute for social and Cultural Research/NICH, National Heritage Library/BNLSIS



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# Who was San Joaquín?

ACCORDING to Catholic and other religious traditions, San Joaquín was the husband of Saint Anne and the father of Mary, mother of Jesus. This makes San Joaquín the grandfather of Jesus Christ. He was from Galilee and a descendant of King David, and is considered the patron saint of fathers, grandparents, married couples, cabinet makers and linen traders. His Feast Day is traditionally on August 16th, but has recently been associated with the Feast Day of Saint Anne on July 26th.



One of the most well known stories associated with San Joaquín is of him receiving a vision while away from home: that of Anne, who had difficulty conceiving, giving birth to a baby girl. During that time, an angel - some say the same of the Annunciation - appeared to Anne, and prophesied the birth of a girl

called Mary who would be a favorite of the Lord. When Joaquín returned home, Anne communicated the visitation of the angel, and Mary was subsequently born unto them.

San Joaquín was known to be a pious and generous man who gave regularly to the poor, but his greatest glory lies in the glory of his descendants, and his role in raising and educating the mother of Jesus Christ. San Joaquín is almost



always clothed in green, the color of hope, and is often depicted carrying a book or scroll representing linen makers, a shepherd's staff for the Christian word, and a basket of doves representing peace.



## The Story of the Foundation of San Joaquin

By Joaquin Magaña

DURING the "Guerra de Castas" in Yucatan, the prosperous jewel of Bacalar was defeated on February 21st, 1858 by the Santa Cruz Mayas. Many inhabitants were killed, a large number fled, and, many were captured by the invaders. Among those captured were Mr. Andrés Magaña from Campeche, his wife a native of Mérida, Felipa García de Magaña, and their young son Vicente. Andrés Magaña was a Mestizo, while his wife was mixed and spoke the Mayan language very well.

Felipa was a very beautiful and intelligent woman. She tried to persuade the guard in charge of those imprisoned at the Fort of Bacalar by professing to them that

she was Maya, and therefore should not be imprisoned. The proof to this was that she spoke the Mayan language very well. After several attempts she was able to convince the guard, who was reluctant to defy his chief, and he finally agreed to assist with their escape. He placed a canoe next to the lagoon which they could use to flee at nightfall.

During the night everything went as planned; the Magaña family fled in a hurry to the canoe. In the distance they could hear the guard shouting the alarm. By then the prisoners were already far from the shore, while the guards fired their weapons in vain. Meanwhile, as Andrés rowed frantically, Felipa removed the water that was coming

in from a hole in the canoe to keep it from sinking. When safely outside the reach of the Mayas, Andrés had to remove his shirt to plug the hole. So with great effort and desperation they managed to cross the lagoon of Bacalar to safety. They were immensely grateful to have avoided an almost certain death at the Fort. Records have indicated that, with the exception of six children who were randomly selected by Mayan leaders, all the prisoners, including men, women, and children, were cruelly massacred at the Fort.

The trauma the Magaña family experienced was horrible, but they were lucky to have been able to cross the Bay of Chetumal to Consejo, Corozal. Andrés preferred not to stay there, despite being in British land, due to its proximity to Bacalar. They then moved to Shipstern, and eventually followed the New River to a small ranch called San Maximo as they still felt that there was a high possibility of an attack on the population. The family then left to another ranch called San José, located in the

southern part of what today is San Joaquin. Both Andrés and Felipa preferred to go more to the north where it was jungle. They felt more secure in the jungle and outside of established settlements.

In 1858 they settled permanently, founding the village which was later named San Joaquin. They were soon followed by other refugees who arrived to colonize. They were: Crecencia Ak, Victoriano Trejo, Feliciano Arceo, John Hassock, José Trunfon, Cecilia Cob and Susana Coye. The small population grew gradually.

The year 1904 was an important year for the population. A Committee consisting of four persons: Fermín Magaña, son of Vicente Magaña and grandson of Andrés Magaña; Marcelino Tzul and Julian Oliva both sons-in-law of Andrés Magaña and John Hassock gave the village the name of San Joaquin. Fermín, inspired by his grandfather Andrés who had told him his miraculous escape from Bacalar, suggested the name San Joaquin and all unanimously agreed. San Joaquin was and is the patron saint of Bacalar and they had great commitment