

LEÓN A HOLY WEEK CITY





María Edén Fernández Suárez



*They will hardly be ten days,
but a whole magical week
that will start with that Mother
when She approaches the square
all wrapped in candles, in Salves,
and amongst ringing of bells
that shout "Make way for the Queen!"
with their thrilled, impassioned voice.*

*Oh, León, get dressed in mourning,
for the Week is nearly here!*

Jorge Revenga

From the Roman León founded by Legio VI to the more contemporary home of the MUSAC (Museum of Modern Art). From the Romanesque intimacy of San Isidoro to the brilliance of the Gothic cathedral. From the cold winter to the summer heat. From the narrow alleys of the historic heart to the wide avenues of the modern city. From the downtown bustle to the quietness of its suburbs. From the oldest traditions to the fast evolving city...

The same León... and yet so different. Like its Holy Week, staged in an unmatched setting and supported by thousands of León people who literally pack out the streets. Dare to discover it!



Fernando González Menéndez







The Holy Week of León put down its roots in the sixteenth century and, since then, the one-time capital of the old kingdom has seen processions going over its streets to this day. In the second third of the twentieth century, the three centenary *cofradías* (brotherhoods) were joined by four more confraternities that opened up the doors of the Holy Week to a new León. And, as late as the first half of the 1990s, the foundational boom brought about the erection of nine more penitential associations.

For León lives ten magical days, with all the significance of tradition and the most contemporary essence...

Sixteen penitential confraternities. More than thirty processional ceremonies. Around a hundred *pasos* (floats) on the street, most of them on the shoulders of thousands of *papones* (*cofrades*, or brothers or sisters belonging to the different *cofradías*) who punctually come to take their place in each procession. And a city that *puts on its robe* with the arrival of the so-called Friday of Sorrows (the Friday before Palm Sunday) and does not take it off until Easter Sunday.

This is, in short, the Holy Week of León; a León that, from the moment Our Lady of the Mercado leaves her temple, thus proclaiming the beginning of the ten most awaited days, until Christ rises to give full meaning to his Passion and Death, lives a beautiful dream.











Moisés García Martínez



Great imagery masters of the past, such as Juan de Juni, Gregorio Fernández, La Roldana and Luis Salvador Carmona, or contemporaries like Víctor de los Ríos and Ángel Estrada, among others, have left their mark on the images, the real protagonists of León's Holy Week.

A priceless heritage that keeps growing year after year and also includes artistic floats ornamented with colourful floral arrays; elaborately designed and embellished processional elements; the music of the more than ten bands of the city brotherhoods. All this, together with the indispensable human heritage, turns each processional *staging* into a display plenty of different details and nuances.

A ten-day week full of traditions: hymns, prayers, encounters, sermons, rounds... Grand and humble customs some deep-rooted, some others quite recent but, in most cases, preserved generation after generation thus becoming the hallmark of León and its people. Religious rites that, together with secular ones, merge into a heterogeneous celebration in which you can pair the typical cuisine of these dates cod or *potaje*, the traditional chickpea and spinach stew, accompanied by the local *limonada*, a drink consisting mainly of macerated lemons and red wine with the many and wide-ranging products of this land, while complying with more recreational traditions such as the game of *chapas*, in which you can try your luck by tossing a couple of copper coins. All this without losing sight of the Passion.



Juan José Castro Celeiro





But from Easter Sunday to Friday of Sorrows, the brotherhoods and confraternities of Leon develop a bulky and varied schedule of activities, especially around Corpus Christi, the Christ of September, Christmas and, of course, Lent.






Masses, images hand-kissing and foot-kissing, inaugurations, sacramental and glory processions..., join a variety of cultural events of different kinds that make León and its Holy Week worth a visit at any time of the year.







*A little boy comes out running
very swiftly on Ancha Street.
He has a hood in his hands,
gloomy dampness in his eyes,
a saddened look on his face,
and he cries out as he runs:*

*“Oh, León, get dressed in mourning,
for the Holy Week is done!”*

Jorge Revenga

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