

ALTARS OF FOOD ARE PART OF ST. JOSEPH'S DAY OBSERVANCE BY DICKINSON ITALIANS TODAY

Staff Special to The News.

Dickinson, Tex., March 18.—Dishes of Dickinson tomorrow will commemorate St. Joseph's day, a time-honored religious custom of the Roman Catholic Church, which is observed on March 19 of each year. A feast day originated in 1442 in honor of Joseph, in the New Testament, the husband of Mary, mother of Jesus. It has lost none of its sentiment throughout the centuries.

With Dickinson Italians it is a day of considerable significance. Each March 19 certain families prepare beautiful altars, surrounded by an abundance of food. With one or two families, it is an annual custom. "As long as Jesus gives them strength," is a saying that these altars, and several others also have it. seldom are there altars in more than five or six homes.

The evening before March 19 the vigil of St. Joseph is kept, and the Italians go from house to house, saying the Rosary at each place. During the afternoon the priest visits each altar and blesses the sacrifices. Father Fitzpatrick of Galveston performed these rites today.

Children Served.

On St. Joseph's day, starting at 12 o'clock, a number of children are gathered about a table before the altar and are served with the food by the adults. Each child is given all he can eat and is given one of the large circular loaves of bread, which is a part of the ceremony. Later the grown people partake of the food, some of which is also distributed among the poor.

During the day and evening these places having altars are visited by crowds of neighbors, who go from one home to another exchanging greetings and joining in the feast.

Each altar is in itself a work of art and devotion. Several weeks in preparation and requiring days of cooking and planning, the feast is beautiful and complete. The altar frames are built from the floor and stretched up nearly to the ceiling, usually occupying the entire side of a room. Each elevation is covered with linens and colored cloths. The altar ceiling is hung with tinsels and metal decorations of many hues, and bordered with red and blue crepe.

Candles or other lights are kept burning before the altar.

On it and on nearby tables are heaped all manner of fruit, vegetables, cakes, pies, candies and fancy pastries, with as many circular loaves as children to be served.

Six Home Altars.

Those having altars this year are children who will participate in the feast at each place are:

Joe Salvato—Josephine Tamburino, Victoria Sedra, Rosa Scarcella, Ben Cicchia, Harry Zinante.

Mrs. Tony Emilio—Johnny Scarpura, Rosalie Mayer, Lena Corallo, Joe Emilio.

R. Bonarrio—Kalle, Charlotta,

Lena, Charlie and Sam Bonarrio.

Frances Giannola—Willa Vianza, Kate Muzzone, Louis Scarpura, Mrs. Elbert Amato, Lawrence Biondo, Joe Marino, Fred Sulle, Anna Balladoni, Lucy Caruso, Rosa Scarcella, - Dado Manotti, Nick Comolatti and Marie Tedel.

Frank Napoli—Johnny Sabatini, Neta Cornelia and Tony Vianza. Peto Zinante—Miles Salvato, Sam Emilio, Julian Corone, Louis Scarpura, Sam Cicchia, Rosa Corallo, Maria Tedel, Mary Alice Tamburino and Gabriel Galera.