

CHILDREN'S DAY

In Mexico, April 30 is "Children's Day." For children and their families here, it is a major celebration, almost equalling Mothers' Day in importance. Throughout the country, activities are held in all of the Primary Schools. These include gifts, piñatas, clowns, and lots of food, cake and candy. Teachers are generally expected to do something special for the children, such as buying or making them gifts.

Outside of the schools, there are also public festivities such as games, races, shows, and other forms of entertainment for the kids. Sometimes they even get to go on a day trip.



Children's Day is also celebrated in virtually all of the churches. The activities are basically the same, but there is an effort to relate the celebration in some way to the faith.



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ELECTIONS IN MEXICO

On July 1 this year, Mexicans will elect a new president, as well as senators and other federal representatives. Presidents here are elected for a six-year term and cannot be re-elected. The prohibition against re-election goes back almost 100 years, and was established in response to the presidency of Porfirio Díaz, who was re-elected to four-year terms repeatedly from 1884-1911 before the Mexican Revolution removed him from office. There are three main political parties in Mexico, which means that there are three candidates who have a reasonable chance of being elected president.

There are a number of other differences between the political campaigns and elections here in Mexico and those in the United States. Candidates cannot begin openly campaigning until about three months before the election, and there is a limit established for how much they are allowed to spend; this limit is the same for all of the candidates. The president in office is prohibited from any type of participation in the political campaigns, and cannot even support candidates from his or her own party, since this is deemed unfair. The candidate who receives the most votes is elected, independently of whether he or she attains more than 50% of the votes cast; the totals from each of Mexico's 31 states and one Federal District are not considered separately in the presidential election but are counted together. There is also a much lengthier period here between the elections and the day the new president assumes office, which is December 1—five months later.

