

# Comenius Programme 2011 - 2013

## We are One - Our new Europe

### Christmas in Slovakia



Primary School Bezrucova  
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Trencin  
Slovakia

# St. Nicholas Day



Children in Slovakia prepare for Christmas since the beginning of December. On 6th December they are waiting for St. Nicholas to come. /Slovak children call him Mikuláš./ Children like St. Nicholas because he brings sweets. Our St. Nicholas looks different from the American Santa Claus because he doesn't wear a red coat, but he is dressed in white - a white cap with a cross, a white long coat and white boots. In his hand he has got a white big wand. He has got a long white beard and on his shoulder he brings a bag full of chocolates, sweets and fruit. He doesn't come on his sledge with his reindeer and doesn't come down the chimney, but he comes accompanied with an angel and a devil. In the evening 5<sup>th</sup> December children clean their shoes and put them under the window. They believe that St. Nicholas arrives at midnight through the window and fills up the shoes with so many sweets, chocolate figurines, bars and other titbits to eat.

In the morning children find their shoes filled up. Parents often say the bad children get only coal from devil. They only frighten children, so young kids try to be nice.

Adults dressed like St. Nicholas, angels and devils come to schools, nurseries and hospitals. Angels are dressed in white and have got wings of feathers. The devils have got tails and hooves. They sometimes carry chains. They give packet of sweets to every child who can sing a song or recite a poem.



# St. Lucy's Day

People in Slovakia celebrate St. Lucy's day on 13<sup>th</sup> December. It is the shortest day of the year, so it is associated with magical practices that protect home and family from witches. People believe that Lucia was the most powerful witch.

This day is celebrated from 5th century. This tradition comes from Sweden. This day means "keeping bad luck from home." On this day you can see girls in white dresses with a white veils on their faces. In one hand they have got basket with sweets and in second a brush of feathers. They sweep dust from home with the feathers. There are some superstitions bound with St. Lucy's day:

1. A girl prepares 13 cards and write the names of 12 boys on them (one card is empty). Each day up to Christmas Eve she removes one card without looking at it. On Christmas Eve she picks up the last card and reads the name on it. The boy on the card will be her boyfriend.
2. Each day from St. Lucy's Day to Christmas a girl bites into an apple before sunrise or sunset. If the apple hasn't been rotten until then it means that the girl will get married. The girl with the apple can stand in front of the house and start to eat the apple until she sees the first man passing by. The name of this man will be the name of her husband.
3. A girl pours the wax through the keyhole or some lead to water. The shape of cast will tell her what the profession of her boyfriend will be.



4. A girl pours some water into the jar and then on Christmas Eve before the Midnight Mass she washes her face in it, the man whose clothes she touches first will be her true lover.

5. A Boy makes a small stool without using any nails. People say that the person who will sit on it during the Midnight Mass will be able to see the witches. If he does not want to be caught by the witches he must pour poppyseeds around Lucy's small stool.



# Advent



This largest and best festival is celebrated in many countries around the world. Folk customs and traditions that are associated with it vary from nation to nation, and are very diverse. In Slovakia, for Christmas, we prepare already four weeks in advance. During this period, called Advent, people buy and prepare gifts for their loved ones, decorate their homes with advent wreaths with four candles corresponding to the number of Sundays of Advent. Each Sunday they light one of the candles and on Christmas Eve table there are all four candles burning on the wreath. During Advent people hang a mistletoe on the front door to keep the ghosts away. Children love an Advent calendar that brings joy every day from 1 December, when you first open the box and find some chocolate in it. Two weeks before Christmas we start to prepare Christmas cakes. We always bake gingerbreads and other sweet cakes.



## Christmas Eve /24th December/

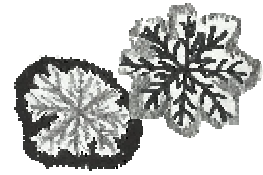
Christmas Eve is the most amazing day for children in Slovakia. There are a lot of traditional habits in our country. No lights should be lit in the house before the first star comes out. If anybody eats before the star he won't see the golden pig. When evening finally comes, the dinner is served. If the number of people around the Christmas table was odd, an extra plate should be used and also an extra plate should be prepared in case an unexpected guest or a person in need comes by the house at the dinner time. All household animals should be fed after the dinner so that no one goes hungry on Christmas Eve. Christmas dinner starts with the prayer or with a celebratory drink. We eat a carp with potato salad, a special sauerkraut soup with sausages and mushrooms, fish soup, wafers with honey, garlic (to ward off demons), dried fruit, nuts, apples and „opekance“ – small pieces of dough – with poppy seed and honey. Menu varies a bit in different regions – some families prefer lentil soup with dried plums, but the fish is served in almost all families as a symbol of Christianity. Before dinner some families also throw walnuts into the corners of every room to ensure good luck for the coming year. We also cut an apple before dinner. If the seeds inside are shaped as a star, all members of the family would be healthy and well, but if they are shaped as a cross, there would be a loss in the family. People also put the carp scale or some money under the table for the luck and wealth. After dinner a parent rings the bell and everyone rush towards the tree to find presents from a little Jesus. In some families people sing Christmas carols around the Christmas tree.







# Christmas Carols



Slovak Christmas carols are different from English ones, but at least two carols are sung by both Slovak and English children: Silent night and Jingle bells.

Let's sing in Slovak and English:

## Roľníčky, Roľníčky

Hurá, už je sneh, rozlieha sa smiech.  
Deti kričia, zvonček znie, biele mámenie.  
Sneh je vôkol nás, svetu dáva jas.  
Rozlieha sa zvonenie, zima je tu zas.

Roľníčky, roľníčky, kto vám dal ten hlas?  
Ježiško maličký, a či Mikuláš?  
Roľníčky, roľníčky, prinášajú sneh,  
Piesne našej mamičky, Vianoce a smiech.

## Jingle Bells

Dashing through the snow in a one horse open sleigh,  
O'er the fields we go laughing all the way.  
Bells on bob tails ring making spirits bright.  
What fun it is to laugh and sing a sleighing song tonight?

Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way.  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh.



## Traditional Christmas sauerkraut soup



### Ingredients:

250 g pork chop  
2 – 3 sausages  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 seasonings.  
black pepper  
30 g dried mushrooms  
1 teaspoon red pepper  
1 teaspoon sugar  
200 g sauerkraut  
100 potatoes  
30 g garlic  
50 g bacon  
1 dl sour cream

### Instructions:

1. Fry bacon cut into little cubs, add onions and when onion is fried, add red pepper and pour 1 litre of water.
2. Put in sauerkraut, pepper and other seasonings.
3. Put meat, cut into cubes into boiling soup, then sausages and at the end mushrooms and potatoes
4. Cook until soft and when the soup is ready, serve with sour cream.

This soup is typical Slovak Christmas dish. People in some regions cook it also with dried plums. Those who don't like sauerkraut serve lentil or fish soup.



# Christmas Day /25th December/

December 25 is the 359th day of the year (360th in leap years) in the Gregorian calendar. There are six days remaining until the end of the year. Christmas or Christmas Day is an annual commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated generally on December 25 as a religious and cultural holiday by billions of people around the world. Christmas is a civil holiday in many of the world's nations, it is celebrated by an increasing number of non-Christians. This holiday plays a major role in the Roman Church. Since the Reformation, Christmas is celebrated one day in advance. That means it's on Christmas Eve, but the 25th and 26th of December are also days of worship of Jesus Christ.

This is the Christmas story:

The angel said to Maria: „You will have a baby. This baby will be Jesus, the son of God.“ Maria was engaged to Joseph. In those days the King of Israel ordered census of the people living in the Roman world . Maria and Joseph had to go to Betlehem. Maria was pregnant.

But they didn't find a place to stay. So they had to stay in a shed. That night Maria gave birth to a baby boy. Shepherds came to visit a little Jesus and they worship him. Later wise men from the east came to the little baby. The King was said that the newborn baby would uncrown him one day, so he ordered to kill all little babies in Betlehem. But angel told Joseph: „Run away, Joseph, the King wants to kill the baby Jesus.“ The Joseph , Maria and Jesus ran away to Egypt. But later when the king had died they came back.





## Boxing Day /26th December/

Christians connect 26 December with the death of St. Stephan, who was stoned to death for his belief in 33 A.D.

In many villages and towns it is customary to hold a dance celebration on Boxing Day. Young people feel bored after two days spent together in the family circle, so they need to have some fun. Families are going to visit their close friends and other family members. People usually spend this day with friends together with good music and wine.



# New Year's Eve /31<sup>st</sup> December /



People in Slovakia celebrate the end of the year on 31st December.

It is called Silvester, because according to Slovak calendar Silvester has a name's day on December 31st. The Pope Silvester I. died on 31. December, that's why his name is written in our calendar. People usually eat soup, but they don't eat fish or chicken, because they believe that eating something able to swim or fly brings bad luck. In the evening people usually have a party with their friends. They dance, play games or talk. A lot of them spend Silvester with TV, where plenty of amusing programmes are on, but others go to the countryside or to the mountains. They take some resolutions like: With the New year I'll lose my weight or I'll stop smoking or I'll work harder at school.

At midnight many youngsters come out in the streets or in the main square and begin to shoot fireworks. All people are watching the fireworks. Some fireworks are beautiful. Some people drink alcohol. Children can have some orange juice. People keep awake until morning and wish their family and friends good luck with the new year.





## New Year's Day /1<sup>st</sup> January/

New Year is the day, when one year ends and another starts. According to the most popular calendar - Gregorian, it starts on the first of January. The evening before the New Year (31.12.) is called the New Year's Eve. That day the whole world celebrates the end of the year and the coming of New Year at one time. In Slovakia, but also in many other places New Year is a Public Holiday.

-Old habits of Slovak people

Now people from Slovakia celebrate the New Year in different ways, but many of them follow the old habits. These are some of the popular old habits:

1: The person who woke up first went out to bring some water and then the whole family washed themselves in it.

2: Some people believe the night before the first of January is magical and their dreams will become true.

3: They also believe that if they do something wrong on the first of January, they will do it wrong during the whole year. That is the reason why people try not to fight or cry.

4: When a girl slipped on ice three times on New Year's Day she believed to get married in a year.

5: All household has to be clean and tidy on New Year because dirt in the house will stay all year long.

6: Most people usually do not work the next day after New Year's Eve. The first of the January is the day of relax and rest.

7: People usually don't eat anything able to fly, because they don't want to let the luck fly away.





## Three Kings Day /6th January/

Every year on the 6. January people in Slovakia celebrate the holiday called Three kings Day also known as Walking with star. It means that three boys in village dressed in long white waists and with the crowns on their heads walk from house to house. In each house they knock and before they enter the house they usually write over the door G+M+B (the names of the three kings - Gaspar, Melichar and Balthazar) with a white chalk. They stop in each house to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and New Year with inhabitants of that house. They usually sing carols and one of them has a little model of Bethlehem.

3 kings or 3 wise men came to Betlehem to worship little Jesus as a king and brought him presents: some gold, frankincense and myrtle.

