



CHRISTMAS IN POLAND

Daniel Zmyślony

DEFINITION

Christmas in Poland - the most important and most solemnly celebrated, next to Easter, religious holiday in Poland. Its traditions took shape over the centuries as customs from pagan times were intertwined with those introduced by the Church. Their shape was also influenced by other church rites and folk traditions. Currently, Christmas is a family holiday and is most often celebrated with the family.



ADVENT

In the church liturgy and in folk customs, Christmas is preceded by a period of three weeks of waiting, known as Advent. During this period, the faithful take part in rorats dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the past, in some regions of Poland, also Advent wreaths were woven, which on the first Advent Sunday were hung in the house under the ceiling and lit a candle. More candles were added on each subsequent Sunday. It has also become a tradition to bake Christmas gingerbread, make decorations for the Christmas tree and send Christmas cards with wishes to relatives and friends. During Advent, December 6 is the day of St. Nicholas, when children are given small gifts, put in shoes or under pillows. Throughout Advent, until the Epiphany, in some regions of Poland, celebrities walk in the villages, singing Christmas carols, reciting poems or presenting herodes inspired by nativity plays.



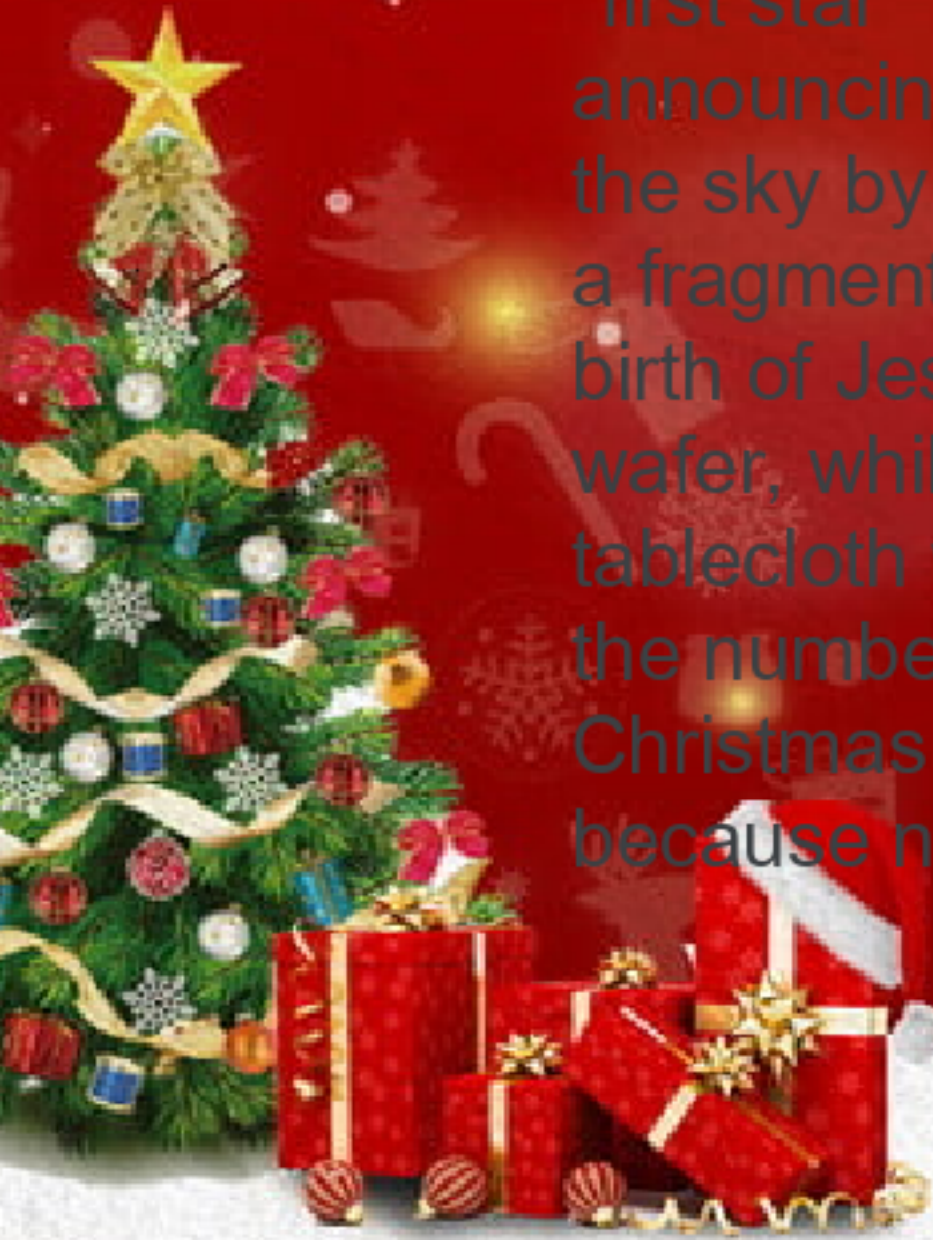
CHRISTMAS EVE

Traditionally, the day preceding Christmas and ending Advent is Christmas Eve. It used to be a preparation for Christmas, but after the calendar reform, it became a part of them. On that day, houses were cleaned and decorated with sheaves of grain, which were placed in the corners of the rooms. They were supposed to symbolize prosperity and abundance. The custom of decorating the Christmas tree appeared in Poland only in the 18th century and it came from Germany.



WHAT POLISH CHRISTMAS EVE LOOKS LIKE

In Poland, Christmas time is counted from dusk and the appearance of the "first star" in the sky. It is a symbolic reference to the Star of Bethlehem announcing the birth of Jesus, which, according to the Bible, was seen in the sky by the Three Kings. Christmas Eve begins with prayer and reading a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew or Luke in the part concerning the birth of Jesus. Then the participants of the supper break with each other's wafer, while making wishes for each other. On a table covered with a white tablecloth with a bundle of hay underneath, one place setting more than the number of people gathered is placed. An additional seat at the Christmas Eve table is intended for an unannounced or absent person because nobody should be alone on that day





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CHRISTMAS DISHES

Depending on the region and family traditions, the set of Christmas Eve dishes is different, but customarily, the table on Christmas Eve should include all the products of the earth, and there should be twelve dishes. You should try each one to ensure happiness all year round. The most typical are: borscht with dumplings, fish, cabbage with peas and mushrooms, dumplings with cabbage, groats with dried mushrooms, beans with dried plums, patties with mushrooms, rice patties with mushroom sauce, dumplings with poppy seeds, sugar and honey, Muffins, challah with dried fruit compote, almond soup or, from the Eastern tradition, pie, cabbage rolls and kutia. In Upper Silesia, urine and makówki are also dishes on Christmas Eve. According to Polish custom, Christmas Eve dishes should be fasting, i.e. meatless

CAROLS

An important element of Christmas Eve, but also throughout Christmas, is singing Christmas carols. There are many of them in the Polish tradition, and the oldest of them come from the Middle Ages. However, they flourished most in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the most popular ones were created. In some parts of Poland, carolers also visit the houses, making wishes and singing carols.



MIDNIGHT MASS

The Christmas Eve evening ends with a solemn mass celebrated at midnight in churches. According to tradition, it commemorates the arrival of the shepherds who were the first to pay homage to the newborn Christ. The custom of celebrating the night liturgy was introduced in the Church in the 5th century and it reached Poland along with Christianity.





THE END

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