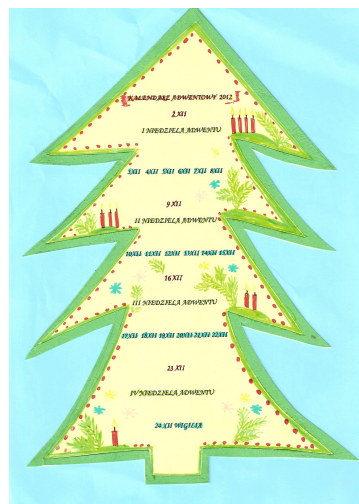


Christmas in Poland

by pupils of Primary School No. 4 in Koszalin

On 1st December we start the time of preparations for Christmas which is called Advent. At this time children get their Advent calendars with chocolates or pictures and they go to church for the early morning Advent mass – 'roraty'. There, every day the priest chooses a different man to teach about during the mass. The children go to church at 6 in the morning with lanterns which they make by themselves. The atmosphere is exciting.



On 6th December we have the Day of Saint Nicolas called Mikolajki. Children get small gifts from St. Nicolas. The presents are hidden in their rooms under the bed or pillows just before they wake up.

When we get ready for Christmas, we make special dishes, do shopping, decorate houses, dress up Christmas trees, send wishes to our families and write letters to Santa Claus. Everyone can't wait for Christmas.



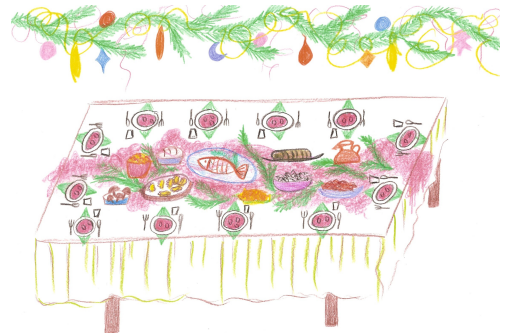
Before Christmas Eve we dress up the Christmas tree. This is a spruce or pine tree decorated with glass balls, chains, sweets, lights and decorations that we can make by ourselves. It's usually very colourful and smelly if real.



On 24th December we celebrate Christmas Eve. This is very important moment in Every Polish family. Then everyone gets together for the Christmas dinner. The dinner we start with sharing the holy wafer and wishing each other all the best. Next we eat prepared twelve dishes.

On the Christmas table we always have twelve dishes. The best in our tradition are: carp, dumplings with cabbage and mushrooms, dry stewed fruit, beetroot

soup with ravioli, potatoes, noodles with poppy seeds, so-called kutia - boiled wheat with poppy seeds and honey, peas in cabbage, 'Greek' fish, cakes like poppy seed cake, cheese cake and gingerbread as well as different salads. All the dishes are without meat.



In Poland the tradition also is to prepare one empty place at the table. This place is for an unexpected guest e.g. someone lonely, homeless, etc. who can knock on our door and we should invite them for the dinner. No one should stay alone on this day.

After trying every dish, children look for the first star in the sky and in this time, as we believe, Santa Claus brings presents. No one can see him, and the presents are put under the Christmas tree. Then we happily spend the time with our families and sing Christmas carols. At midnight



we go to church for the ceremonial Midnight Mass called 'Pasterka'.



enjoy the time altogether.

The next days, 25th and 26th December we also go to church where we can see the Bethlehem cribs in which we can watch the birth of Jesus. Then we meet our families and

On these days some people also start carolling. People dress up as the Angel, Goat, Three Wise Men, Sheppards, etc. with musicians and they go from house to house to sing carols and say the Christmas wishes. For that they can get sweets or food gifts from the Christmas table.

On 31st December we organize balls and parties for the New Year's Eve. The Polish have fun while waiting for the midnight. Before the midnight everyone measure the time and at 12 o'clock sharp all over the country the fireworks shows start, we open champagnes and wish each other all the best in the New Year. People staying at



homes watch live New Year's parties broadcasted from the capital or another big city.

On 1st January we celebrate New Year's Day. On this day we go to church and meet our families.



6th January is another holy day, because we celebrate the Day of Three Wiseman. On this day we go to church where the priest glisten incense and chalk. We take the chalk home and write on our door K+M+B which are the first letters of Three Wise Men and the year.

On this day we can also take part in the Three Wise Men's parade. There we walk along the streets of our cities in disguise of the Bible characters from the scene of visiting newborn Baby Jesus. We can also see Bethlehem cribs and watch Nativity Plays called 'Jaselka' showing the story of Jesus' birthday.

