



Weekly Briefing

Slovakia social briefing:
November traditions in Slovakia
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November traditions in Slovakia

November in Slovakia is connected with lots of habits and traditions. Autumn is slowly over and the Slovaks are expecting the first snow, which should bring by custom “Martin” on 11th of November on a white horse. This day is a nameday for all Martins in Slovakia. Moreover on 25th of November we can find in Slovak calendar a typical woman name “Katarina”. On this day, it was customary to organize a party for all your neighbours and family. After that date the advent period is coming, during which noisy parties and weddings were banned. This tradition has been still preserved in some Slovak villages. Not only that type of traditions is brought to us by November. In November, Slovaks also celebrate many Christian feasts. All Souls Day, Remembrance Day and Reformation Day.

All Souls' Day and the Day of the Remembrance of the deceased have been celebrated in our territory for several centuries, and the original customs associated with the feasts persist to this day. The most widespread activities of Slovak citizens on the Day of the Remembrance of the deceased are burning of candles on the graves of relatives and acquaintances and visiting cemeteries. All Souls' Day originated in the Eastern Christian Church in the fourth century as a memory of those who suffered or laid down their lives for faith. From the seventh century, it began to be remembered in the Western Church as a day dedicated to Christian saints who were not celebrated individually in the church calendar, as well as in memory of the first Christians buried in the Roman catacombs.

According to the law, this feast is also a holiday day in Slovakia, thanks to which the faithful of this church have the opportunity to dedicate themselves to its celebration without having to take a holiday. Those who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church use it for activities related to the memory of deceased family members and acquaintances, but also for prayers at graves or worship.

Slovak feast “dušičky” is officially called in the civic calendar the Day of Remembrance. In the Christian tradition is important to serve Mass for the souls of the dead. In the Roman Catholic Church, its content is to commemorate all souls in purgatory and to help these souls with prayers and indulgences, which can be obtained during their soul period by prayer and by visiting a church or a cemetery.

Burning candles on graves is a sign of the immortality of souls and God's mercy. Evangelicals do not give the same meaning to the burning of candles as Catholics, but for most

of them the burning of a candle as a memory of the deceased is part of the experience of this day.

The Reformation Day

During this time of the year, not only Roman Catholic, but also Slovak Protestants have special occasion to celebrate. The Protestants of Augsburg Confession in Slovakia and the world commemorate the Reformation on 31 October. The process of church reformation began on October 31, 1517, when an Augustine monk, German theologian, preacher, reformer and founder of Protestantism Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed 95 thesis at the door of the Castle Temple in Wittenberg against the sale of indulgences and also against the clutter in the church. In Slovakia, 31 October - the Reformation Day - is a commemorative day.

The purpose of the Reformation was, from the very beginning, a return to the Word of God, correction of mistakes and purification of the Church. Martin Luther's speech at Wittenberg began a process called the Reformation.

For the evangelists in Slovakia, the feast of the Reformation is not only a memory of historical events, but a process in which the individual and society should realize whether they are on the right path, correct the mistakes and strive to return to the right path. It means a daily return to the Word of God. On the Reformation Day, the solemn services of God are held in the Evangelical Churches and the Pastoral Letter of the Bishops' Choir of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession (ECAV) is read.

Unlike the Catholics who celebrate the Feast of all saints (All Souls day) on November 1 and have a remembrance of all the faithful deceased on November 2 (Day of the Remembrance) protestants do not have a feast of all saints, and on November 2 on the Day of Remembrance of the Dead at the graves they remember their relatives. The Protestants do not pray to the saints, but to the Holy Trinity: God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

During the past years, people in Slovakia have started to celebrate another tradition - Halloween. Halloween is celebrated on the eve of All Souls' Day. Today, Halloween celebrations in Slovakia have become a place for fun in various scary masks. During traditional Halloween, children are mostly dressed in costumes visiting neighbours and asking for sweets. It is celebrated mainly in the Western world. Halloween was not always a happy holiday. October 31 had several names. Some called it devil night, for others it was evil night. For others, it was a day of mischief, when they frightened neighbours or friends with various "pranks".

Halloween gradually began to turn into a family holiday. People dressed in different costumes and "haunted" acquaintances, held various costumes shows, social gatherings and "parties". On this day, decorate homes and bake pumpkin pies. Children look forward to dressing up for ghosts of all kinds and go from house to house with the slogan "TRICK OR TREAT", which means "Give us a hand because we'll get you something out". The homeowner usually gives children sweets and fruits. If the owner says "trick", he can count on some inconvenience.

In Slovakia we do not go from house to house. Halloween is spreading in Slovakia mainly through corporate or school parties, while the Feast of All Saints is taken as an intimate family holiday. Halloween does not overlap the feast of all saints or reformation because people distinguish between the private and the working world. It is known that holidays are becoming more and more privatized, and this Halloween remains on the institutional basis. In the consciousness of people, however, autumn holidays are associated just with the traditional Slovak holiday, not with its American alternative. All Souls' Day and Halloween are quite the opposite, but since the grieving nature of the deceased's memorial is not "celebrated" in the society, the public space is more likely to have a moment of fun and fun associated with Halloween. In Slovakia, the family still has a high priority and the holidays at the beginning of November are the time when most people visit their family members and remember those who have passed away. Halloween itself came to Slovakia after 1989 due to Americanization. Halloween arrived in the United States with Irish immigrants and changed from the 19th century to American form. Although the fun and walking around the houses in scary masks do not match our environment, in the past, in the south of Slovakia or Austria this time was considered a pumpkin holiday. These crops were cultivated in these areas, so they were carved in the autumn and lighted into them.

In general, the picture of November is characterized by calming down and spending time with families. Most Slovaks hit the road to visit their loved ones, living mostly in rural areas. It doesn't matter, if we are celebrating the All Soul day, the Reformation day or we rather use the Halloween costume, November is the perfect opportunity for Slovaks to stop for a while, get out from the work circle and have a great time with a family and the loved ones.

All this brings November in Slovakia.