

March 28th

BULGARIA

Palm Sunday (Tsvetnitsa)



Palm Sunday is one of the most popular holidays in Bulgaria, both on the religious and folklore calendars.

On Sunday before Easter the Orthodox Church celebrates Palm Sunday, or the day of flowers, plants and trees. With this celebration the

Bulgarian Orthodox church marks the glorious entry of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.

During that day believers go and pick willow twigs which symbolically replace the palm leaves. They are sanctified in the temple with special prayers and it is these willow twigs that give the other name of the day according to Bulgarian tradition /Vrubnitsa/. After the holy liturgy the preachers give away the willow twigs to people in the church. They take them home and keep them all through the year for good health of the healthy and the healing of the sick. It is believed that the sanctified willow twigs keep people away from every evil. That is why the twigs are placed over the home icon. People are still in the days of the Easter lent fasting so the Bulgarian Orthodox church allows fish to be served on Palm Sunday.

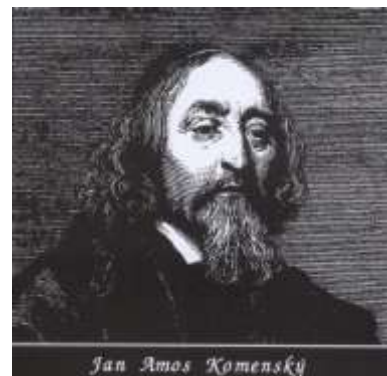
Palm Sunday, or popularly known as Flowers' Day or Willow's Day, is related to the spring abundance of flowers and verdure. On that day all people named after a flower, a plant or a tree celebrate their Name Day. In Bulgaria they are one out of every 10, so that makes the festivity popular and joyful!

CZECH REPUBLIC

Teacher's Day

According to the decision of UNESCO in 1994 the International Day for teachers was declared on 5th October, but ours, Czech Teacher's Day, has much longer tradition. Why?

On 28th March 1592 in Moravia the great "teacher of nations," Jan Amos Comenius, was born. He was a Czech teacher, creator of the modern educational system



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in accordance to individual abilities and differences. That's why on this day all teachers are celebrating their holiday - Teacher's Day.

Jan Amos Comenius came from a middle-class family, together with parents and four sisters he lived in the town called Uherský Brod. After the death of his parents and his two sisters (1604), his aunt took care after him in Strážnice. Jan Amos began to study here and then he continued to study at the Latin grammar school in Přerov and then at the university in Herborn. Already as a student he helped to his educator, Johann Heinrich Alsted, with creation of the general encyclopedia. After his studies he visited Amsterdam and studied at Heidelberg University. In the year 1614, he returned via Prague to Přerov and Works as a rector of the Latin school. Two years later he was ordained a minister of the "Unity of the Brethren," then he became married and taught in Fulnek. Here, he wrote one of his famous work "Letters to Heaven."

The sharp deterioration in the situation of "Unity of the Brethren" happened during the Counter-Reformation which occurred after the Battle of White Mountain, therefore its was unable to exist. Many Protestants left the country as an exile. Jan Amos Comenius was also forced to leave the Fulnek. After several years in hiding he had to leave and he settled down in the Polish city Leszno. At the beginning, he hoped to soon return to home, so he wrote in Czech there. Comenius prepared a plan to improve the organization of educational system "The brief conception of reopening of schools in the Czech Kingdom." In Leszno he became the deputy rector of the grammar school and during this time he created the majority of his works in the field of education, for example: "Czech Didactic." He wrote "The Great Didactic" its later revision is known as "Didactica magna", "Gate to Languages Unlocked" and "School of Pansophy." These works made Comenius famous throughout the whole non-Catholic Europe. He was invited to universities in many European countries. Initially Comenius refused the invitations and then he accepted the invitation of the English Parliament. From England he went to give his lectures to Swedish universities, later he returned to Leszno in Poland, where in 1648 his second wife died. When in the year 1648 "Peace of Westphalia" was signed and the Thirty Years War ended, but the hope of Czech exiles who would like to return to their home country definitely died out. Comenius said his Goodbye to the home country and the Church through his piece of writing which is devoted to the "Unity of the Brethren." " In 1651 he went to Austrio-Hungarian Empire where he spent three years. The books "The World in Pictures" and "School by play" were written there. In the years 1654-1656 he was again working in Leszno, but after the fire in which he lost his valuable manuscripts Comenius left Poland and escaped to Amsterdam. He has never left Holland, because on 15th November 1670 he died. He was buried in the church in Naarden.

Identify themselves and to place themselves in the world, control themselves and rise themselves to God, these are the basic aims of education by J. A. Comenius, so the science, arts and crafts education as well as moral and religious education. He highly appreciated the importance of education. According to Comenius a child should not be excluded from education, because even the least gifted child may be slightly educated. He emphasized the importance of discipline. Comenius rejected corporal punishments for ignorance, but for commandment of discipline he allowed them in some cases.

It used to be customary that the pupils gave to their teachers flowers or small presents, of course, students didn't expect tests during these days. The late survey shows that the current students do not celebrate the birthday of „Teacher of nations“ so much.

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LITHUANIA

28th MARCH - PALM SUNDAY (A WEEK BEFORE EASTER)



Lithuanian palms

Palm Sunday is a spring festival in Lithuania which is celebrated on the last Sunday before Easter. This holiday is called Palm Sunday. The Catholic Church introduced the consecration of palms in the 5th century.

In Lithuania it was thought that on Palm Sunday everybody had to have the juniper twig or other palm. The most noticeable custom of Palm Sunday is beating by twig and saying the following words: "It's not me but twig is beating".

Lithuanians had a lot of habits of consecrated palm usage. If thunderstorms came, the palm twig was burnt in the oven or at least that holy smoke was incensed. Before sowing the fields, crushed palm needles were mixed with grain. The Palm twig was inserted into the soil in order ice not damage crops. Children were whipped by palm twig to make them grow faster. Palm twig was used in touching cattle when it was put off to pasture for the first time in spring.

Palm Sunday is a festival of heart opening to Christ. Sacred palm twig brought home has to protect from evil. Next year the old palm twig has to be burnt, not to be thrown away.