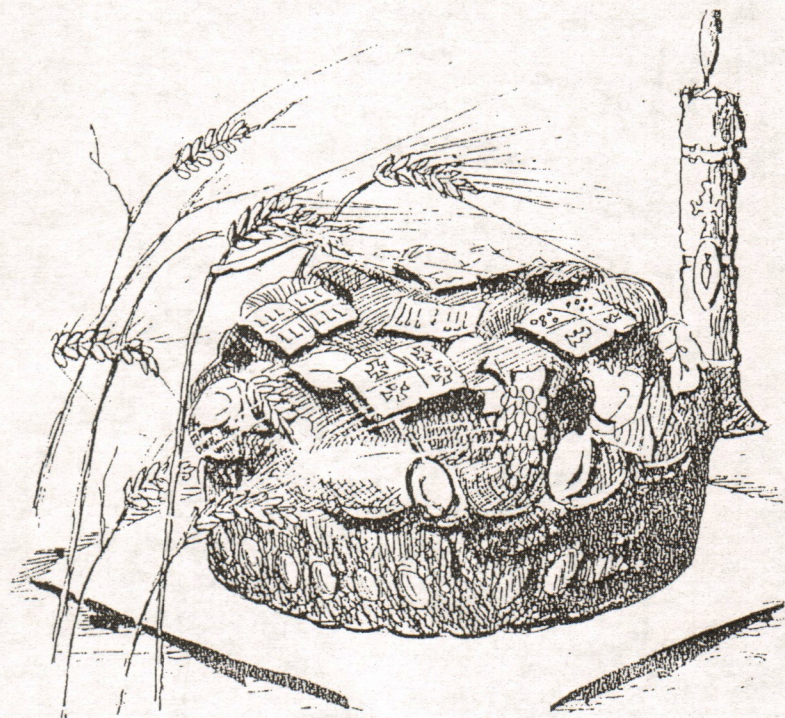


SERBIAN SLAVA



"...and may these gifts to us be blessed."



Serbian Krsna Slava
Patron Saints Day

Welcome home for Krsna Slava

The Serbian people first accepted Christianity in the ninth century under the influence of two Greek brothers — Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Different Serbian clans were baptized on different days. Since each day on the Christian calendar commemorates a particular saint, each clan adopted the saint who was honored on the day of their baptism as their family's special protector and intercessor before the Lord.

The Serbian Orthodox family lays everything aside and comes together every year on its Patron Saint's Day — its "Krsna Slava". It has done so ever since the day — centuries ago — that its ancestors first became Orthodox Christians. The family rededicates itself to God's service, strengthens the bonds of family love that already exist, and spiritually refreshes itself.

Central to this unique celebration is a prayer service offered by the parish priest, who visits the home and brings special blessings on Krsna Slava. Prayers are offered to the family's Patron for his or her intercessions before God on behalf of everyone in the family. The priest mentions the name of each individual in the clan.

Led by the priest, the family then gathers around a special festal bread — the "Slavski Kolac" — which is an offering of thanks to the Good Lord for his blessings upon the household. Each family member helps turn the decorated bread several times with their right hand while prayers of glorification and thanksgiving to Christ are sung. The priest then cuts the kolac in the form of the cross and sprinkles it with wine, which symbolizes Christ's suffering for us.

In the traditional Orthodox Christian manner, the priest exclaims: "Christ is among us!" Family members reply: "He is and shall be!"

A candle burns throughout the ceremony which symbolizes the light and burning love of Christ for all mankind.

"Koljivo", cooked wheat mixed with sugar and spices, is prepared as an offering of thanks for the fruits of the earth. The sugar is a reminder of the sweetness of heavenly life for those who attain it through righteous living.

Every Serbian Orthodox family has an icon of its patron saint on the eastern wall of its home. It is a constant reminder that: *Ko Slavu slavi, njemu i Bog pomaze! God helps him who celebrates his slava!*