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Grant Scheme BG161PO001/3.3-01/2008 "Support for Effective National Marketing of Tourist Product and Improvement of Information Service", Contract No BG161PO001/3.3-01/2008 /001-5 "Multimedia Catalogue of the Tourist Sites and Electronic Marketing of Destination Bulgaria"

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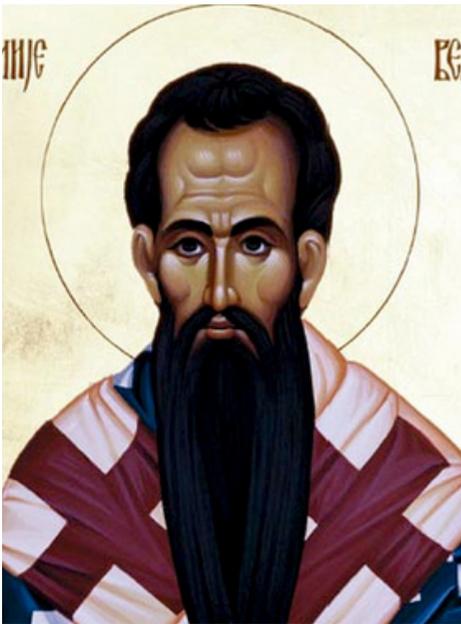
Bulgaria has adopted the tradition to celebrate each Christian celebration of birth or death of a saint - the people bearing the name of the saint celebrate their personal holiday - Name day. There is almost no Bulgarian name, which is not related to or derivative to the name of a Christian saint.

The church calendar is full of such holidays, and most of them are concentrated in the winter months. The Bulgarian people worshipped the saints and followed strict rituals and ceremonies on each of the feasts.

The most revered are the days of St. George, St. Peter and Paul, St. Mary, St. Dimitar, Archangel Michael, St. Theodore, St. Vasilius, St. Athanasius, St. Nicholas, St. Stephen, St. Constantine and St. Helena, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Palm Sunday and others.



St. Vasilius *(1 January)*



On 1 January the Bulgarian people welcome the new year and honor St. Vasilius the Great. According to the tradition, on this day young children aged between 5 and 12 years visit each house of the village and perform the ritual survakane. The kids slightly hit the backs of the older people with cornel sticks, decorated with popcorn, dried fruit and colorful threads, and wish them health and

prosperity. In exchange for this, the older people donate the children sweets and money. This day is celebrated by everyone called Vasil, Vasilka, Veselin and Veselina.



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Epiphany and St Jordan's day

(6 January)

On 6 January Bulgaria celebrates the great Christian holiday Epiphany. It is believed that on that date Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the waters of the sacred river Jordan. On that day, after the worshipping at the church, the priest blesses a cross and casts it in the water in a river, a lake or a sea. According to the tradition, after the cross should jump all young men. It is believed that the man, who reaches it first and takes it out of the water, will be healthy and happy throughout the coming year. This day is celebrated by Yordan, Yordanka, Yonko, Yonka, Dancho, Danka, Bozhidar, Bozhidara, Bogdan, Bogomil.

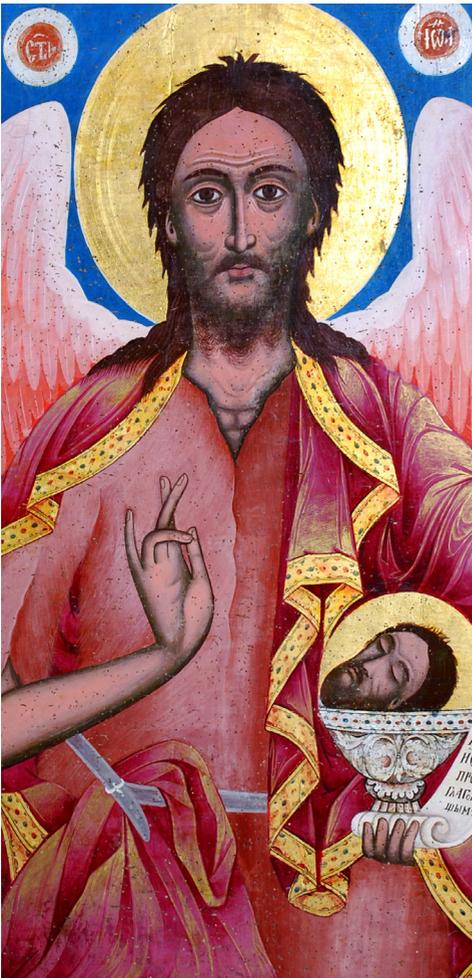
St. John's day

(7 January)

On 7 January the Bulgarian Orthodox Church celebrates the Day of St. John the Baptist. This day is celebrated by everyone named Ivan,



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Ivanka, Ivo, Iva, Ivelina, Yoan, Yoana, Kaloyan, Vanya. It is believed that if it's not icy and cold on St John's day, in summer there will be diseases of humans and livestock. St. John the Baptist is one of the most revered saints of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. According to the tradition on this day young and old people should bath for health. On 7 January the families worship their godfathers - they visit them and bring them buns, meat, sausages and wine.



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St Athanasius's day (18 January)



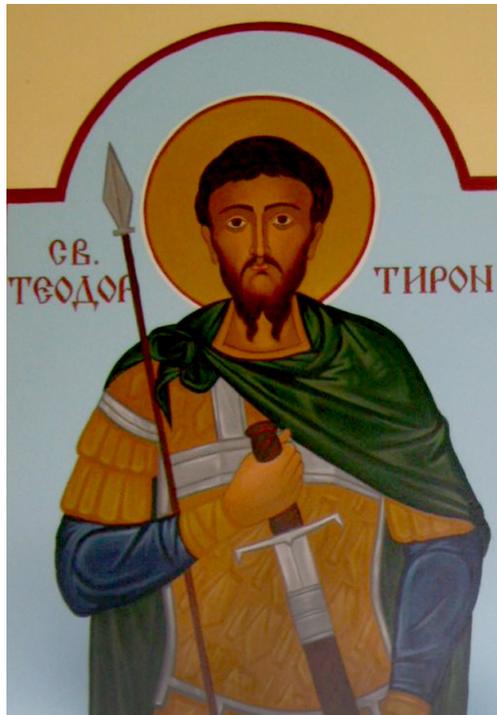
On 18 January, the Orthodox Church honors St. Athanasius. According to the legends, he was a healthy man, who put on a white shirt, got on his white horse and climbed the Balkan Mountain and summoned the sun and the summer. This holiday is associated with the coming of spring and the

sun. 18 January is celebrated by the master blacksmiths and the people, called Atanas and Atanaska. The name Atanas comes from Greek and means immortal.



St. Todor's day *(first Saturday of Lent)*

During the first Saturday of Lent the Bulgarians celebrate the day of St. Todor and honor the memory of St. Martyr Teodor Tiron. The holiday is also known as Horse Easter as its name is related to kushii - organized horse races. The horses are decorated with tassels and beads, and their manes and tails are twisted. The fastest horse in the race and his master win awards. This day is celebrated by everyone named Todor, Todorka, Teodor, Teodora.





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The day of St. Lazarus (8 days before Easter)

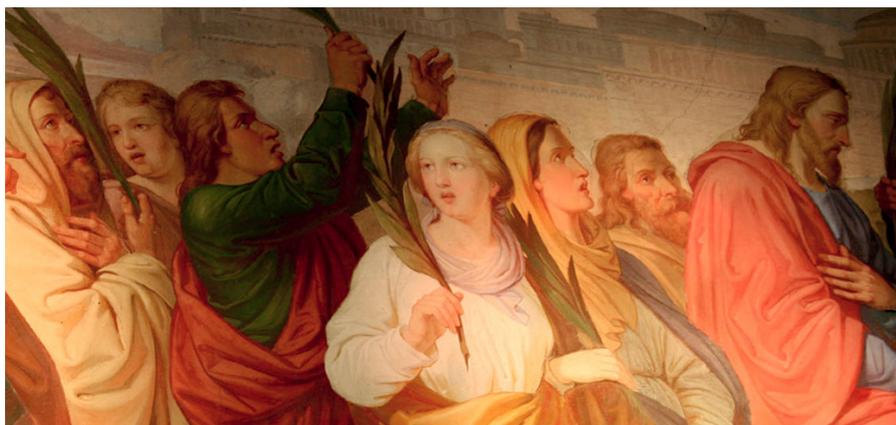
The day of St. Lazarus is a great feast for Bulgarians. On this day - 8 days before Easter, people perform a ritual called lazaruvane. It is associated with girls growing up and turning into women. The



holiday is associated with the coming of spring and the rebirth of nature. All unmarried girls adorn themselves with their best outfits and visit the houses in the village, singing songs for health and good harvest. This day is celebrated by everyone, called Lazar and Lazarina.



Palm Sunday *(the Sunday before Easter)*



Palm Sunday is one of the greatest Christian holidays for Bulgarians. This day is celebrated by everyone, bearing the names of flowers and plants - Tsveta, Tsvetelina, Tsvetan, Tsvetanka, Violeta, Kalin, Kalina and many others. The holiday is celebrated on Sunday - the day after St. Lazarus's day and a week before Easter. The rituals are a continuation of those on the day of St. Lazarus and are associated with the coming of spring. The holiday is called Vrabnitsa and Tsvetnitsa.



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The day of St. George (6 May)



The day of St. George is an official holiday in Bulgaria and is celebrated on 6 May. This is the day of the Bulgarian Army, as it is believed that St. George is the patron of all Christian soldiers. This day is celebrated by everybody with the names Georgi and Gergana. Georgi is the most common male name in Bulgaria. Traditionally, on the day of St. George Bulgarians eat roasted lamb.



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St. Cyril and St. Methodius (24 May)

On 24 May Bulgaria celebrates two great holidays - the day of the Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture and the Slavonic alphabet, and the day of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius (who created



the Cyrillic alphabet in the 9th century). This day is celebrated by all Bulgarians, but mainly students and their teachers. It is a non-educational day for all schools in the country. 24 May is celebrated by the people bearing the names of the two saints - Kiril and Metodiy.



St. Peter's day (29 June)



On 29 June the Bulgarians honor the memory of the Apostles Peter and Paul. This day is celebrated by everyone with the names Petar, Pavel, Petya, Petrana, Pavlina, and people with the name Kamen, which is a translation of the Greek name Peter (stone). According to the folklore tradition, no important agricultural work should be carried out on the day of St. Peter. Women bake special bread and pick early apples (called petrovki), and take them to the church. After the priest sanctifies them, hosts give them to their neighbors and wish them health.



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The Assumption of Mary

(15 August)

On 15 August the Bulgarians honor the memory of Virgin Mary. This is one of the greatest Christian summer holidays. The holiday is best known as Great Mary. Small Mary is celebrated on another date - 8 September and is the day of Virgin Mary's navity. The day of Virgin Mary is celebrated by all women and girls with the names Maria, Mariana and their derivatives. The name Maria is very common in Bulgaria.

Faith, Hope, Love and Sofia

(17 September)

On 17 September all Bulgarians honor the memory of three young girls - Faith, Hope and Love (Vyara, Nadezhda, Lyubov) and their mother - Sofia, who died for their Christian faith. This day is celebrated by everyone with these names and their derivatives. 17 September is the official day of the capital, whose name means wisdom.



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St. Dimitar's day (6 October)



Dimitar is one of the most common male names in Bulgaria. Therefore the feast of St. Dimitar of Solun is celebrated throughout the country. According to the folklore concepts, this is the day, when winter begins, and the saint St. Dimitar is the patron of the winter frosts. This day is celebrated by everyone with the name Dimitar, Dimitrina, Mitko, Mityo and others.



Archangel Michael's day (8 November)

Michaelmas, as the holiday is known among the Bulgarian people, is a great Christian celebration for Bulgarians. Archangel Michael, who is also called by the Bulgarian people Rangel, according to the folklore beliefs, is a young man who comes to take the souls of those who have to leave the earthly life. This day is celebrated by everyone with the names Angel, Angelina, Rangel, Mihail, Mihaela and their derivatives.





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St. Nicholas day

(6 December)

6 December is the day when Bulgarians pay tribute to St. Nicholas. He is considered the patron of the water element, so this day is celebrated as the day of fishermen. 6 December marks the end of autumn fishing. The saint is also considered a protector of home and family, and is also honored by merchants and bankers. Bulgarians eat fish on the day of St. Nicholas - most often stuffed or fried carp. This day is celebrated by everyone with the names Nikola, Nikolay, Nikolina, Nikoleta and others.

St. Stephen's day

(27 December)

The day of St. Stephen is the third day of Christmas and the last holiday of the year. It is assumed that on the day of St. Stephen the young families should visit each of their godfathers or older relatives. This day is celebrated by everyone with the names Stefan, Stefana, Tanya, Stamen, Stoimen, Stanimir, Stanimira, Stoil, Stanka, Stoyan, Stoyanka and their derivatives.



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