

The Miracles of Epiphany

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On 6 January the Bulgarian Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany, which is the third most important Christian feast.

According to the biblical legend, on this day John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ in the River Jordan.

Bulgarians call this feast Yordanovden, and on this day the water is consecrated and the occasion is marked with a liturgy and a festive blessing of the waters. The church minister throws a cross into the water, and the men and bachelors jump after it and compete to retrieve it. The custom is performed in a river, lake or sea. According to belief, the fortunate one who takes the cross out of the icy waters will be healthy, happy and prosperous throughout the year. The water into which the cross has been thrown is believed to have healing

power, and therefore on this day sick people bathe there. There is another belief – if the thrown cross freezes in the water, the year will be successful and fruitful. On this day many other rites with the consecrated water are also performed. Early in the morning maidens and young wives visit the river, lake or sea to immerse the icons and the ploughshare. It was believed that in this way the wheat would be white throughout the year. After this ritual, the women and maidens wash their faces and hands for beautiful and smooth skin, for health and against the evil eye and spells.

The third and last “incensed supper” is laid on the eve of the feast. As on the previous evenings, only Lenten dishes are prepared for the table: wheat, fresh round bread, beans, boiled cabbage, stuffed vine leaves with rice or bulgur and others. Also customary on the table are walnuts and wine, as well as lighting the partially burnt candle from the previous incensed evening. The bread kneaded by the housewives for this feast is made of wheat flour and millet – “in honour of the millet”. After the end of the supper, the walnuts from the three incensed evenings are cracked and divination is made according to the kernel inside. If it is rotten, it is believed that illnesses and death are to come, and if it is sound, the members of the family will be healthy.

On this day celebrate – *Yordan, Yordanka, Dancho, Danka, Bogolyub, Bogolyuba, Bozhan, Bozhana, Dana, Boyan, Bogdan, Bogdana, Borislav, Borislava, Bozhidar, Bozhidara, Boncho, Bozhil.*

Happy Name Day!