

THE STEIGER'S E-PRAYER & PRAISE REPORT DECEMBER 2006

Dear Friends,

With love and appreciation we send you another special bi-monthly
E-mail Prayer & Praise Report (E-PPR) about Czech and Slovak ministry:
WE ASKED—YOU PRAYED—HE ANSWERED:

***Moses said, `THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME
FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED
to everything He says to you.
(Acts 3:22)***

Dear Friends and Partners of the HCJB World Radio Ministry
to Czech and Slovak People,

It's time to send to you our greetings in the Name of our Savior. It seems that Christmas starts earlier and earlier each year. Instead of a regular ministry update we would like to give big THANKS to all of you for your faithfulness and love toward His ministry that He performs through us. Your prayers and support play a special part in our hearts. You are His gift to us.

We would like to share with you some December Czech traditions and celebrations.

The first tradition is "Mikulas":

The Eve of St. Nicholas' (Santa Claus') Day (December 6), known as Mikulas in Czech, has always been special. Adults and many teenagers traditionally dress up as St. Nicholas, an angel, and a devil visiting children to see if they have been well-behaved. In the past, the experience could be quite scary for youngsters - especially the youngest - afraid that the devil, complete with horns, chains, and shaggy fur coat, would take them away. But, it may be changing - nowadays more children seem to be taking it as just a chance to dress up. The post communist invasion of Santa Claus to shopping malls started to overshadow traditional Czech customs. Most people resent Ho-ho Santa as an American global take over. Actually this year an anti-Santa movement changed that and you can hardly see any Santa display. One day with gift-giving Santa who is dressed up as a Catholic bishop, angel and devil is enough. For more details see:

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=84>

The second tradition is nativity scene displays:

There are countless nativity scene displays all around the country at public places. About 200 towns put up large exhibitions that encompass tens and hundreds of nativity scenes each. Not even mentioning that almost each Catholic or non-Catholic Church in the country has its own nativity scene. On the St. Nicholas' Eve (December 5) we took the Dworaks to two of eight exhibitions in Prague. What a folkish beauty and creativity. They were astonished how a basically secular, godless country is treasuring its traditional spirit of Christmas with love and adoration. Such immense Christian displays would not be tolerated in the U.S.A., especially in public places, and some other Western, historically strong Christian countries. These displays grow up year-by-year. We think that the Czechs, though they are mostly non-believers, use this as a protest against the commercialized Western Santa Claus who isn't even a Bishop. In addition to that, the Western Santa Claus is visually non-distinguishable from the Russian Grandpa Frost whom the Czech always associated with oppressing Soviet Communism.

The third and most important Czech Christmas tradition is Jezisek - Baby Jesus or Infant Jesus.

It's not a fairy-tale figure, such as Santa Claus, who brings Christmas presents to Czech children. In fact, it's not a tangible being at all. Czech children receive Christmas gifts from "Jezisek". Due to his holy origin, Jezisek (the "Bambino") cannot be grasped, painted or cast in plastic, let alone be used as a cheap attraction in shop windows.

The custom of giving presents on Christmas Eve or early in the morning on December 25, took hold during the Reformation in Protestant German lands. Proponents of the new custom included reformist Martin Luther (1483-1546). The gifts, which were meant to reduce the popularity of St. Nicolas (Santa Claus), were called Christkind (Christchild) or Jezisek in Czech. Luther refused to celebrate the day of St. Nicholas in his family [since St. Nicholas was a Catholic bishop] and didn't give his children any gifts until Christmas Eve. The custom spread quickly over Western Europe, but Jezisek didn't take root everywhere. In Protestant England, for instance, it was still St. Nicholas, nicknamed Santa Claus. Santa then conquered almost all the world (in many regional variants). However, Jezisek (Infant Jesus) won the hearts of believers in South Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, and partly in Slovakia. Till now we have two gifts days - St. Nicholas comes with angels and devils on eve of December 6th to fill stocking with small gifts for good kids and coal or potatoes for misbehaving children.

(Above mentioned information about baby Jesus, with our explanation comes from Review, In-flight Magazine of Czech Airlines)

We are enclosing two links to some Czech traditions, prepared by Czech Americans in Nebraska. To hear Czech Christmas carols, visit following pages and you will find more:

http://www.nebraskaczechs.org/czech_christmas_traditions.htm

<http://www.thedumplingnews.com/>

Please continue praying for:

- Slovak studio: the recent development came once again to a major obstacle. There is a noise factor and the reconstruction would cost much more than expected.
- We lost one of our supporting churches. We are cutting all possible corners in the Ministry budget. Broadcasting and publishing is financially demanding. During the last few years we were gradually forced to start supporting those projects that were previously self-supported from Czech donations. We are not using paid professional services and we reduced to the legal minimum our required personal support to keep everything going. In October we had to bail out the local Czech budget from general Ministry reserves. Praise the Lord that He is replacing some lost support by others supporters. The US dollar is continues the bad news. Its value is plummeting like a free-falling rock. Our support has been halved in five years due to the unfavorable exchange rate. Our next year's budget will be somewhat reduced since Pavel will start drawing his Social Security check. Welcome and thanks to our new partners.
- We pray for Trans World Radio's situation. Their budget is about \$50,000 short for this year of 2006.

<http://www.praguepost.com/articles/2006/11/08/taking-on-staunch-czech-atheists.php>

To conclude, please pray with us for the ministry to Czech and Slovak people. We have numerous projects to finish and new ones on the horizon. We praise the Lord for the privilege to serve and ask Him for His protection and blessings for YOU and US, as we stand TOGETHER at His throne.

Blessed Christmas to all.
In His Sovereign Grace and Service,

Klara and Pavel Steiger
Your HCJB World Radio missionaries in Czech and Slovak Republics

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