

SANTA CLAUS DAY

(6th December)



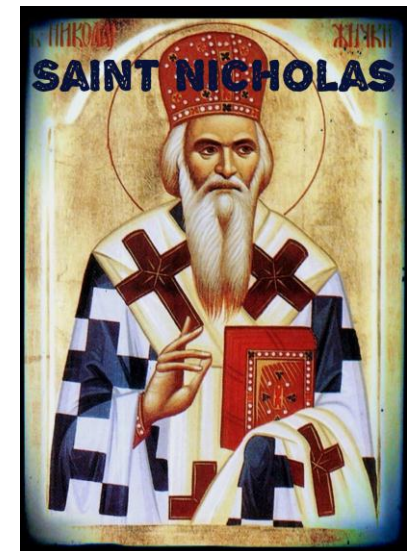
Christmas ≠ Santa Claus Day



- In Hungary, Santa Claus Day and Christmas are two different holidays.
- We celebrate Santa Claus Day on the 6th of December and Christmas between the 24th and 26th December.
- **Santa Claus Day** is a holiday for the children when they get some sweets and smaller presents from Santa Claus. A chocolate Santa Claus is a typical present, you can see an extra large one in the girl's hands.
- **Christmas** is a family holiday and traditionally we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ this time. We set up the Christmas tree, have family meals and all family members give presents to each other.
- In some religious families, it can be the Baby Jesus or an angel who brings the presents on 24th of December, but NOT Santa Claus.

The origins of the character

- **Historically, the character of Santa Claus derives from two different characters:**
- The first one is the pagan **Winter Father** who you can find in the mythology of many peoples, for example in the character of the French **Père Noël**. His character is considered to come from the Germanic God **Odin**. This pagan god-like figure either brings rewards or punishment at the winter solstice (the shortest day in the year), according to the deeds of people.
- The second one is the Christian Saint, **Saint Nicholas**. He is always kind and generous to people.
- Accordingly, we have two different words for Santa Claus in Hungarian. One is **Télapó** (literally Winter Father), the other name is **Mikulás**, from the Slavic variant of the word Nicholas.



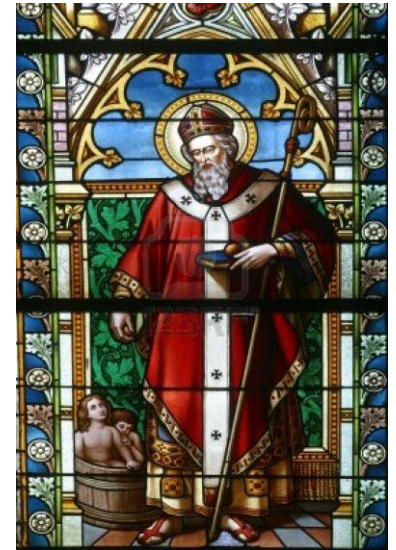
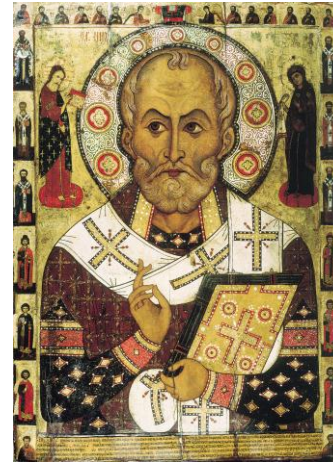
Ded Moroz

- In the Communist era the pagan name **Télapó** (Winter Father) was used officially – in analogy with the Russian **Ded Moroz** (literally Father Frost) who brings presents at New Year's Eve.
- Nowadays the name **Mikulás** is more frequently used.
- In these pictures, you can see Ded Moroz, who is often accompanied by **Snegurochka** (his granddaughter and helper).



Saint Nicholas

- Santa Claus' other Hungarian name, **Mikulás** comes from the Christian Saint, Nicholas.
- **Nikolaos of Myra** was born in **Patara** and became the bishop of **Myra** (present-day **Demre** in Turkey) in the **4th century**.
- He had a reputation for **secret gift-giving**, such as putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him.
- According to the legend, a poor man had three daughters but could not marry them because they did not have any dowry. Nicholas wanted to help them, but he did not want any people to know about it so he went to the poor man's house under the cover of night a **threw three purses filled with gold coins through the open window**.



6th December



- In Hungary, **Santa Claus comes at night before the 6th December** (the day of Saint Nicholas according to the Catholic calendar) and brings some gifts to the children. When they wake up the following morning, they can find these presents in the windows of their rooms and in their shoes.
- Most of the time they only get **sweets, fruit and smaller presents**, because they receive the more expensive gifts at Christmas.
- Traditionally, if they were good they get presents and if they were bad they get **virgács** (a bunch of twigs to beat them up). Usually they get both, but nowadays golden virgács is only a symbolic object (meaning punishment).

Celebrating in kindergartens and schools

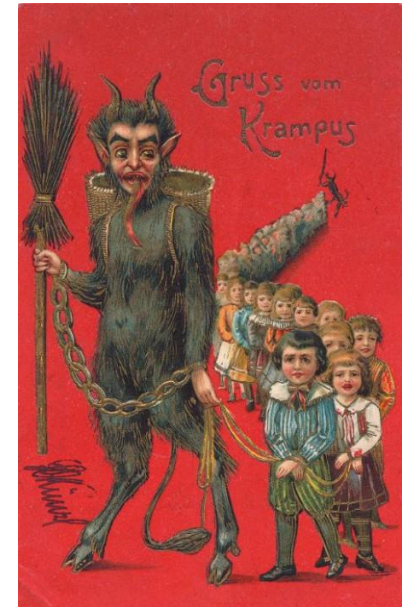


- Of course, children cannot meet Santa Claus when he comes at night, they can just see from the presence of the gifts that he was there.
- However, a real Santa Claus often comes to the kindergartens and schools on the 6th of December and gives some small presents (usually sweets) to the children.
- He wears a long, red robe with a white rim, a typical red Mikulás cap and a white beard.
- Usually he hands out the gifts in a small red sack, which we call **Santa Claus pack**.



Old and modern traditions 1.

- In Hungary, the tradition of the gift-giving Santa Claus started about **100 years ago**. Since then, his character has changed.
- In old times, Santa Claus walked around the houses accompanied by some **krampusz(es)** (demonic characters). Santa Claus represented goodness and reward for good deeds, krampuszes represented evil and payment for bad deeds. (They represented the two faces of the pagan god **Odin**: he is good and bad at the same time.)
- In modern times, Santa Claus often walks around without krampuszes and does not punish but only reward children. He is good and generous and not frightening any more.
- In the bottom picture, you can see Santa Claus walking around the Budapest Zoo, handing out some fruit.



Old and modern traditions 2.

- In old times, Santa Claus lived in heaven and came down from **heaven** at the night of 5th December.
- In modern times, he lives in **Rovaniemi, in Lapland** and travels by a rein-drawn sledge.
- Around the 6th of December, **Joulupukki** (the Finnish name of Santa Claus) comes by plane from Rovaniemi to Hungary to meet Hungarian children and bring them some gifts.





Thank you for your attention