

THE CHILDREN FROM BETLEHEM (BETLEMAŠI)



It is an old and almost forgotten Slavonian custom. On the first Sunday of Advent the children seriously start preparing for the Christmas by learning Christmas songs. It lasted up to the Christmas Eve. As the dark starts to fall on the Christmas Eve, they come to the church and go around the village singing the songs what they learnt.

They visit the priest's home first and then they go from house to house. They stay in each house five to ten minutes and sing four or five songs. On leaving the house, the hosts gave them something for their effort. It used to be an apple, nuts, dried plums or pears, but today it is usually money.

The children visit houses till midnight when they go to church to the holly mass. After the Midnight Service the children share what they got.

There was another custom in some of the places which took place at the same time as **Betlemasi**. The custom was called Adam and Eve, the children go from house to house and play a little sketch about the Original Sin.

When it happens that both groups come to the same house at the same time, it is really beautiful.