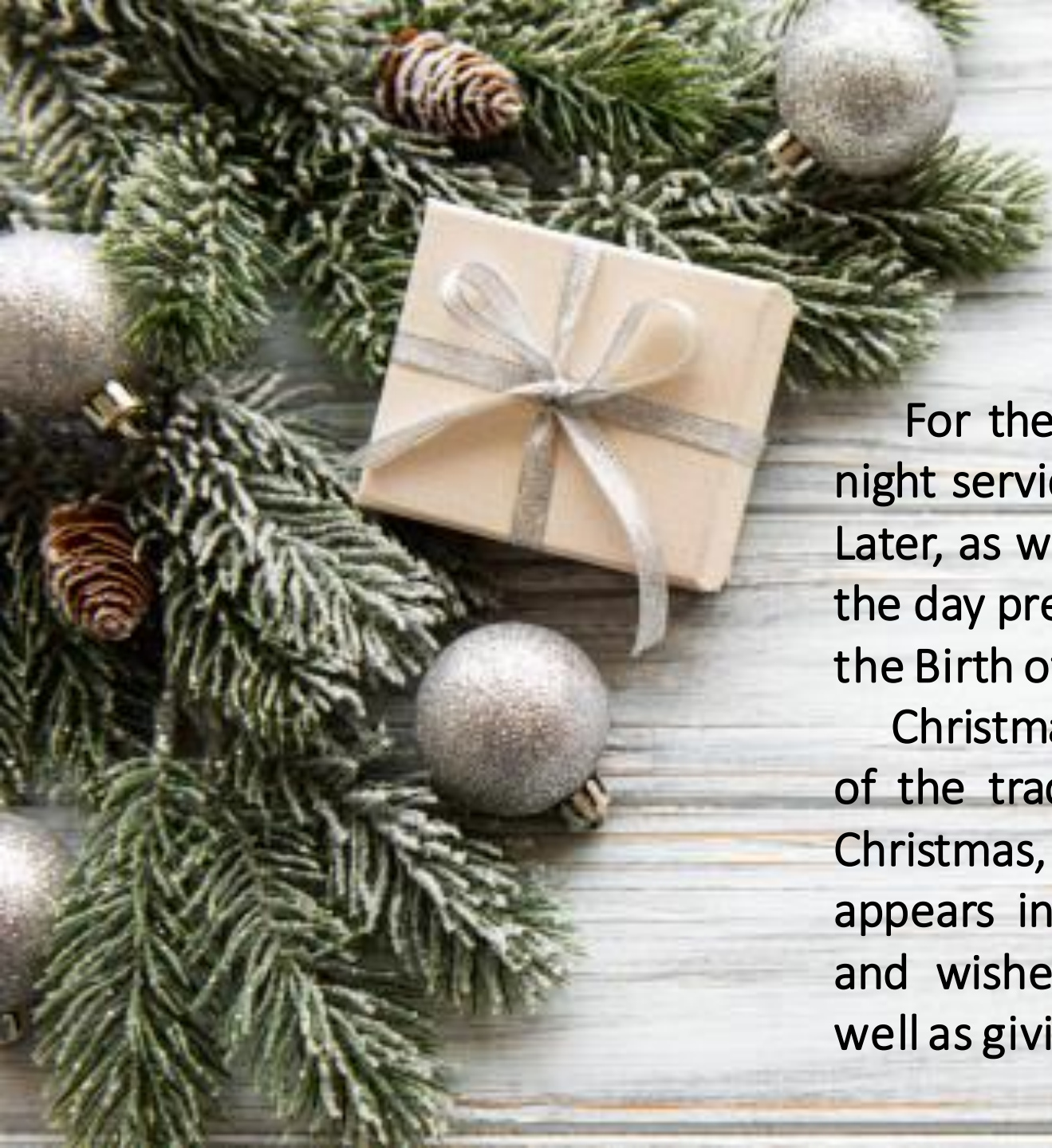




Christmas in Poland



For the first Christians, Christmas Eve was mainly a night service, a prayer vigil, before every major holiday. Later, as well as in modern times, we call Christmas Eve the day preceding the great church holidays - Christmas, the Birth of Jesus Christ.

Christmas Eve is not only a day, this is also the name of the traditional supper preceding the holy night of Christmas, held at our homes when the first star appears in the sky, combined with sharing the wafer and wishes, singing Christmas carols and pastorales, as well as giving one other gifts by the Christmas tree.

Decorating Christmas tree

In many houses, the Christmas tree is decorated on Christmas Eve. Although it is a very common custom, it does not belong to Polish Christmas Eve traditions.

In our country, it caught on only at the end of the nineteenth century, in middle-class and noble houses. In country houses, instead of a Christmas tree, sheaves of grain or tree branches were placed in the house.





Twelve dishes:

Traditionally, the table on Christmas Eve should contain twelve dishes that symbolize the apostles.

Christmas Eve dishes:

1. Beetroot soup with dumplings
2. Greek-style fish (fish in tomatoes)
3. Compote of dried fruit with spices
4. Dumplings with cabbage and mushrooms
5. Fish in vinegar
6. Potatoes
7. Noodles with poppy seeds
8. Carp
9. Kutia
10. Poppy seed cake
11. Bread
12. Herring





Hay under the Christmas table cloth

Another Polish Christmas Eve tradition is putting hay under the tablecloth with which the Christmas Eve table is covered. It symbolizes the stable in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

A dark wooden surface decorated with green pine branches, brown pinecones, and star-shaped spices. The pine branches are on the right side, with several pinecones scattered across the surface. The star-shaped spices are scattered across the left and center. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Additional cover at the Christmas table

Free setting at the table is an important Christmas Eve tradition that makes us remember about all lonely people. It also means that we are ready to invite anyone who knocks on our door that evening. The empty cover also honours the memory of the loved ones who could not spend Christmas with us or passed away forever.



Sharing the wafer

One of the most important Christmas Eve traditions is sharing the wafer. Contrary to appearances, it is not only about the nice habit of making wishes. The wafer is a symbol of reconciliation and forgiveness, and people who are in conflict with one other cannot sit at the table on Christmas Eve. A seemingly small gesture shows that people feel affectionate, do not hold grudges against one other and feel united.

The Midnight Mass is celebrated on Christmas Day at midnight on December 25 and is one of the most important liturgies in the Catholic Church. It is celebrated in memory of the little shepherds who were watching over Jesus in prayer.

When they heard the news of the Lord's Nativity, they were just grazing their sheep, but when the angels appeared to them and announced the Good News, they did not hesitate to go on their way. They wanted to pay tribute to the Child as soon as possible





Merry Christmas Everyone!

**Aleksandra Świacka
Zespół Szkół nr 6
im. Karola Brzostowskiego w Suwałkach**