

Poland

Dec. 24 (eve) → Jan. 6

Boże Narodzenie

(boh-ZEH nah-roh-zehn-neh)

- young children assemble stable with figurines of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, donkey, lambs, shepherds and Three Kings [called a szopka
pron = SHOP-kan]

manger =
"Jasłki"

- celebration begins on Christmas Eve when family sees 1st star (Bethlehem star)

- straw is placed under table to represent the manger; in center of table is a bundle of hay; always one empty place set for any stranger that might come to the house (signifying Christ Child)

- Supper begins with a ceremony which presents the spirit of love and peace

(1) head of household or oldest member takes a small bite from a rice wafer, passes it to next of age until it reaches youngest child; hope is that each person will have their wishes fulfilled during the next year

Peace
wafer
"opłatki"
small white
wafers

(2) after supper is over, lighted tree seen for 1st time and presents are exchanged

- Polish Christmas centers around soup, both secular and sacred

= Pasterka (Mass of the Shepherds) is heard by family on Christmas Eve at midnight