

Read the text and do Reading Comprehension tasks.

Saint Blaise festivity - Dubrovnik's Day

The day that is dedicated to Dubrovnik's patron saint, Saint Blaise, an old man who carries the City in the palm of his hand and whose statues decorate city walls and entrances, has been a special day for the City of Dubrovnik since 972 when it was celebrated for the first time.

This traditional celebration starts on the day of Our Lady of Candelora, February 2, with the releasing of white doves, which symbolize freedom and peace, in front of a church dedicated to the saint and by raising Saint Blaise's banner on Orlando's column. Apart from the religious festivities in Dubrovnik, during those days numerous secular activities have been organized for domestic residents and tourists alike. Restaurants offer typical winter delicacies and you can enjoy many exhibits and concerts dedicated to Saint Blaise, and during a walk on city walls you can see over a hundred stone depictions of Dubrovnik's patron saint. It is hard to decide what is more beautiful and attractive on Saint Blaise's day. Folk costumes of Croatian Littoral region, Župa dubrovačka or Konavle, all evoke the times of folk customs. Colourful red banners catch the eye as they flutter on the square behind Orlando, and we are mesmerized as well by a group of trombunjeri who carry short and broad rifles on their shoulders which had been used in the past to create noise and frighten away enemies of the City. They fire their guns before entering the City, on Brsalje, where, during the time of the Republic, shooting rifles and cannons was practiced. In the evening, when darkness envelops the City, and saint's relics are resting in the treasury, guests from surrounding villages return home. Green laurel wreaths decorate the front of the beautiful baroque entrance into the saint's church, stained-glass windows shine on the façade and statues of Saint Blaise, a saint who for centuries has been holding a model of the City in his outstretched hand, as if trying to bring the City closer to his heart and protective embrace, gazes down at the passers-by from the city walls, lavish buildings and churches.

In over one thousand years since the City under Srđ started celebrating its patron saint, not much has changed. True, Dubrovnik no longer has its Rector or nobility, but the beautiful stone Rector's Palace is still here, as well as the baroque St. Blaise's Church adjacent to it, a baroque cathedral which represents the most important and enduring commitment of Dubrovnik inhabitants to their patron saint. This year, for the 1045th time, Dubrovnik will again treat its patron saint with a

traditional festivity which was made a part of UNESCO's register of intangible heritage in 2009. The traditional celebration starts on the day of Our Lady of Candelora, February 2, with the releasing of white doves, which symbolizes freedom and peace, in front of a church dedicated to the saint and by raising Saint Blaise's banner on Orlando's column. Each year on February 2, when Dubrovnik celebrates Our Lady of Candelora, people repeat the old dictum: "Candelora, winter goodbye, Saint Blaise follows her and says it is a lie." Truly, on that day, when continental cities are drenched in torrential rain and the rest of Europe is often caked in ice, Dubrovnik is full of mimosas, almonds in full bloom and sunny spring days.

On the day of the festivity itself, February 3, the numerous faithful and church dignitaries come to the City from nearby areas carrying the saint's relics across Stradun and city streets in a solemn procession, and under a baldachin is the greatest of all relics, the shroud of Jesus. In front of Saint Blaise's Church, the banners salute the patron saint who has been protecting the City for many centuries. This is an opportunity for the participants to not only demonstrate special skills but also to show off beautiful and original folk costumes. Throughout the day, priests bless the faithful in the church, using two crossed candles since it is believed that Saint Blaise protects against throat diseases. The Saint Blaise festivity is also the Day of the City of Dubrovnik, which is why apart from religious ceremonies these days are rich in various activities. During the solemn session of the City Council, which is organized in Dubrovnik's baroque Marin Držić Theatre, an award from the City is presented. Many diplomats, businessmen and political dignitaries from Croatia and throughout Europe visit Dubrovnik during this period.

Numerous religious and secular activities, exhibits, book presentations, theatrical plays etc., are dedicated to Dubrovnik's patron saint during those days.

The day dedicated to Dubrovnik's patron saint, Saint Blaise, an old man who carries the City in the palm of his hand and whose statues decorate Dubrovnik city walls and entrances, has been a special day in Dubrovnik since 972 when it was first celebrated. The celebration is unique in itself, typical for Dubrovnik.

(Source: adapted from

http://www.tzdubrovnik.hr/lang/en/get/sto_raditi/53037/saint_blaise_festivity_dubrovniks_day.html)

