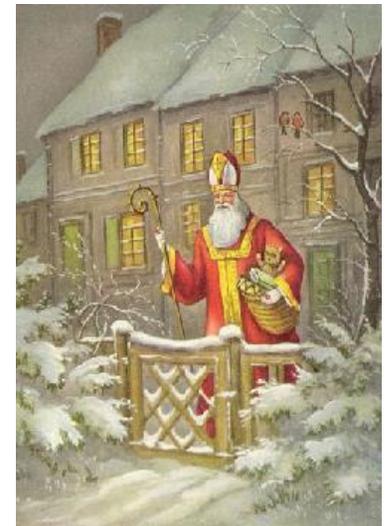


Christmas in France



La Fête de Saint Nicolas

- This celebration happens on 6th December in the North and East of France.



- Saint Nicholas is the Patron Saint of Children.



- Children used to line up their shoes in front of the fireplace, hoping that Saint Nicholas will leave them goodies inside.

- Today, children open their presents on Christmas day like other children in France, but Saint Nicholas is still an important figure in Christmas celebrations.



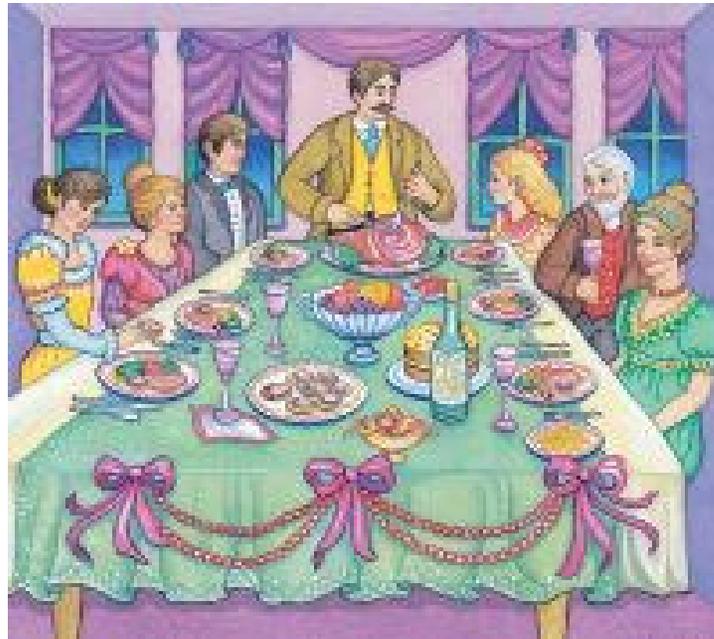
- On 6th December, he travels around towns and cities on decorated floats handing out sweets to children.

Le Réveillon

- Fewer and fewer people attend Midnight Mass in France these days, but it is still important for many families (usually Catholics).



- Midnight mass is followed by a huge feast called *Le Réveillon* (meaning wake up or awakening).



- Traditional foods during the Christmas celebrations include:
 - La bûche de Noël (yule log)



- Le pain calendeau – a Christmas loaf, of which part is given to a poor person.
- La Galette des Rois – a small charm is often hidden inside, in some areas there may be another item hidden too – usually a broad bean! Whoever finds the charm is then King or Queen and may choose a partner.



La Fête de Saint Sylvestre

- This is New Year's eve in France. It is celebrated with a special meal amongst family and friends.



- Mistletoe is hung at the front door and at midnight it is traditional to give a kiss or hug underneath it for good luck.



- When midnight arrives, cars toot their horns to celebrate.
- At midnight, the dancing begins and continues into the early hours.

La Fête de l'An

- This is the time when people visit friends and relatives to wish them Bonne Année!
- They rarely send Christmas cards, preferring to send cards at New Year.



- They drink wine or champagne and sometimes give each other gifts called 'étrennes'.

La Fête des Rois

- This happens on 6th January (Epiphany).
- Throughout the month of January, people eat Galettes des Rois.



- A traditional way to serve it is for the youngest child to sit under the table and shout out names. It is then served in that order.
- Hidden inside the galette is a “fève” (charm). The person who finds it becomes King or Queen for the day and wears a cardboard crown.

