

**State Budgetary educational Institution of the city of Moscow  
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**Research work  
«Christmas: Catholic and Orthodox churches»**

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## **CONTENTS:**

|                                                                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>I. Introduction.....</b>                                                        | <b>стр. 2-3</b> |
| ➤ Aim                                                                              |                 |
| ➤ Tasks                                                                            |                 |
| ➤ Urgency                                                                          |                 |
| ➤ Methods and techniques of research                                               |                 |
| ➤ Materials of research                                                            |                 |
| <b>II. Main part.....</b>                                                          | <b>стр.3-6</b>  |
| ➤ Chapter 1. Dates of celebrating Christmas .....                                  | стр.3           |
| ➤ Chapter 2. The nature of the celebration and the decoration<br>of churches ..... | стр.3-4         |
| ➤ Chapter 3. Fasting.....                                                          | стр.4-5         |
| ➤ Chapter 4. Christmas Dinner .....                                                | стр.5-6         |
| ➤ Chapter 5. Presents .....                                                        | стр.6           |
| <b>III. Conclusion.....</b>                                                        | <b>стр.7</b>    |
| <b>IV. List of sources.....</b>                                                    | <b>стр.7</b>    |



## INTRODUCTION

Although the Christian religion is not a single one, but is represented by different currents and groups, there are holidays that are traditionally celebrated by Christians. For example, Easter and Christmas. Christmas is the brightest holiday for Christian believers.

In Russia, Christmas is a wonderful, bright holiday with its century– old history and traditions – spiritual and national, because always the soul of our people was the Orthodox Church, and its heart was the Russian village. It is they, these traditions that have given a strong solid foundation to cultural traditions, Culture preserves rules, customs, traditions.



While learning English and learning about the Catholic Christmas in the UK, we became interested in how different the celebration of Christmas is in the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

**Topic:** The celebration of Catholic and Orthodox Christmas (based on Russia and Great Britain).

**Hypothesis of the study:** we assumed that this holiday, regardless of the differences in its form in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, in essence and in content, has the same meaning both in Russia and in the UK.

**Purpose:** To conduct a study and find out how different the Catholic Christmas is from the Orthodox one. Can we say that these are, in fact, completely different holidays?

### Tasks:

1. To study the traditions of Christmas celebration in Russia and the UK
2. Identify the features of Christmas rules and traditions in Russia and the UK
3. To consider and conduct a comparative analysis of these traditions according to the same criteria.



4. On the basis of the information received, draw a conclusion that either confirms the proposed hypothesis, or denies it.

**Urgency:** Christmas is not only a bright holiday of Orthodoxy. Christmas is a holiday returned, reborn. The traditions of this holiday, full of genuine humanity and kindness, high moral ideals, are being rediscovered and comprehended again today. In order for the holiday to become a step of our spiritual growth, we need to understand its spiritual meaning. To better understand it, you need to see it in comparison.

**Object of research:** Christmas holiday

**Subject of research:** features of the celebration of Christmas in Russia and the UK.

**Research methods and techniques:**

1. Empirical (comparison and comparison);
2. Theoretical (data collection, material study, analysis, data synthesis).

**Research material:** books, manuals, websites.

**Practical significance of the study:** this material can be used in English lessons, during class hours and quizzes, in FRCSE (Fundamentals of religious cultures and secular ethics) classes.

## MAIN PART

### CHAPTER 1. DATES OF CELEBRATING

People celebrate Catholic and Orthodox Christmas in different ways: in the UK, for example, Christmas is celebrated from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of December, in Russia we celebrate it from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> of January.

This difference in dates is because of the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars.





## CHAPTER 2. THE NATURE OF THE CELEBRATION AND THE DECORATION OF CHURCHES

Among **modern Catholics**, the character of the Birth of Christ holiday has shifted more to the usual life, moving away from the church. There are external attributes – installations of doll mangers with the Christ child in churches and on city squares, decoration of Christmas trees, a ritual of exchange of gifts. In Catholic churches, nativity scenes are installed-mock-ups of the birth of Christ, consisting of several figures. Among them there must be the figures of a Baby in a manger, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. On December 25, Catholics gather in families for a festive dinner, light candles, and say a prayer of thanks to God.



**For the Orthodox**, Christmas is the feast of the birth of Jesus Christ. This is a purely spiritual holiday. In the Orthodox world, the Birth of Christ is a great church holiday, accompanied by solemn divine services, magnificent and long. Immediately after Christmas, Yuletide begins – two holy weeks that last until Epiphany Eve and end on January 18<sup>th</sup>. These days it is customary to arrange fun games, visit other homes, congratulate everyone with carols.

The day before the feast of the Birth of Christ is called “Sochelnik” by the Orthodox. The name comes from the traditional dish that is prepared on this day — sochiva (boiled wheat or rice with honey). By Christmas Eve, Orthodox churches are decorated with fir branches and flowers.



## CHAPTER 3. FASTING

**Catholics** do not have fasting as such. There is a so-called Advent-the waiting time for the holiday, which is not considered as a fast period, although many believers do not eat meat food on Christmas Eve. It is considered a time of spiritual purification, starting from the fourth Sunday before the Christmas

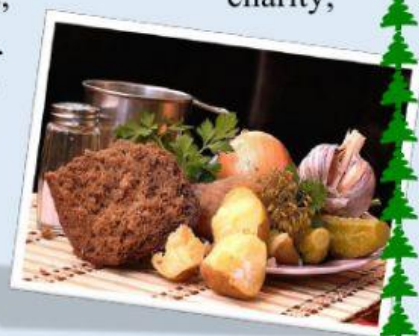




holiday. It is divided into two stages in the calendar. The first one lasts until December 16<sup>th</sup>. The second one is from December 17<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. This period is a direct preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Christ and is dedicated to the memory of the First Coming of Jesus Christ.

Catholics try to devote more time to prayer, church attendance, and socializing with their families during the month before Christmas.

**Orthodox Christians** begin to prepare for the feast of the Birth of Christ by observing a 40-day fast that ends on January 6<sup>th</sup> — the night before Christmas. Fasting consists in performing good deeds, helping others, and fighting one's own bad habits. According to the charter of the Church, it is necessary not to eat dairy, meat and on certain days fish products.



For the Orthodox, the Christmas Fast is the last multi-day fast of the year, which lasts for forty days and is therefore referred to in the Church Charter as the Lenten Fast, as well as the Great Lent. Since the plot for fasting falls on the day of the memory of St. Nicholas. the Apostle Philip (November 14th, old style), then this post is called Philippov. You cannot eat meat, eggs, dairy products. On weekends, you can eat fish.

## CHAPTER 4. CHRISTMAS DINNER

**In Catholicism**, without a "rich" table, a holiday is not a holiday. Interestingly, each country has its own set of traditional dishes. It is believed that there should be twelve of them (according to the number of apostles). Of course, now these boundaries are blurred. However, there are several signs that the table is set in a Catholic family.

Must be served:



- ❖ fish dishes (smoked, salted, fried, baked or as part of a salad, it does not matter)
- ❖ cranberry jelly
- ❖ sochivo (barley or wheat grains cooked with honey)
- ❖ a wafer (a thin unleavened bread Christmas)



And, of course, gingerbread. Without them, Christmas will not be sweet. In England, a Christmas meal is impossible without a fragrant turkey with cranberry or gooseberry sauce and a pudding.

**The Orthodox** have a rich table - a symbol of good luck next year. According to popular beliefs, 12 Lenten dishes are prepared for Christmas. It is believed that on the table at Christmas should be present:

- ❖ kutya
- ❖ sochivo
- ❖ meat dishes
- ❖ fish dishes
- ❖ game
- ❖ pastries (including carols, or goats).

The traditional Orthodox Christmas dish is considered to be goose with apples. And drinks: fruit drinks, jellies, broths.



## CHAPTER 5. PRESENTS

At Christmas, **Catholics** give everyone presents. For Catholics, Christmas presents are more important – they are expected not only by children, but also by all adults. The main character of the Catholic Christmas is, as a rule, not a newborn Savior, but Santa Claus. It is from Santa that children, hanging beautiful socks over the fireplace, are waiting for gifts. And even their Christmas tree is called "Christmas" - "Christmas tree", and not "New Year", as we say in our country.



On Christmas Night, Orthodox children do not wait for gifts. Father Frost comes to them on New Year's Eve. It is customary for Orthodox people to give, first of all, gifts for the New Year. At Christmas, small gifts are usually given and only to relatives, godchildren, and children.





## CONCLUSION

*The entire Christian world — Orthodox and Catholic-glorifies this event, rejoices in it and becomes, even for a while, kinder and more merciful. For Catholics and Orthodox alike, the nightly Christmas meal has one thing in common – it brings together family members at the table. Christmas is a family holiday. In the Christian world, it is customary to celebrate it at home, in the circle of relatives and friends.*

*The differences are in the details, and the similarities are in the heart and spirit of this great and bright holiday. The Savior has appeared to the world! And it does not matter – in what year and on what day.*

*The true spirit of Christmas remains unchanged, despite all the differences between the Catholic and Orthodox world. At Christmas, it is customary to give good, help those in need, and do charity work. This is the essence of this great holiday. The main thing is that the good was born, which means that the spirit of Christmas is alive and continues to work wonders.*



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