

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Prepared by the WDP of Slovenia

March 1st, 2019

“Come – Everything Is Ready”

Country Background Information

Republika Slovenija is a Central European country, with Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the north-east, Croatia to the south and opened to the rest of the world by the Adriatic Sea.

Slovenia measures 20.273 km² and there are four major natural units: the Alps, the Pannonian Plains, the Dinarides, and the Mediterranean Area. Its highest mountain is Triglav (2864m).

The Karst region was created by water dissolving and seeping through limestone, shaping fantastic underground caves. The limestone Karst region was among the first in the world to be explored. There are more than 10,000 karst caves in Slovenia; only 21 of these are open to tourists.

Slovenia has two million inhabitants, with 102 inhabitants per square kilometer. Around half of the population lives in urban areas. Ljubljana is the largest city with approximately 280,000 inhabitants.

Slovene is the official language, but Hungarian and Italian are co-official languages for those minority communities.

Ethnically, 82% are Slovenes; 6% Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Albanian migrants from former Yugoslavia, and among the 0.5% are Roma, Hungarians and Italians. The Roma are a people thought to have originated to the East, perhaps in the Himalayas. While they have migrated to many countries, they have maintained many of their own customs and their language. Even today, many are nomadic. They can be found throughout Europe.

After declaring its independence from Yugoslavia on June 27th, 1991, Slovenia adopted a flag with three equal horizontal stripes, white, blue and red with the Slovene Coat-of-Arms in the top left quadrant: the white for Mount Triglav, the blue lines for the Adriatic sea and local rivers, and the golden stars from the coat-of-arms of Counts of Celje, a Slovenian dynastic house from late 14th century.

CLIMATE

Slovenia lies in the northern temperate belt. Due to the Adriatic Sea, Pannonian basin and the Alps there are three types of climate: mountain climate in the alpine and pre-alpine regions, in the mountain valleys and on the high Dinarides - the winter temperatures fall well below 0°C; temperate continental climate - prevails over most of the country; average winter temperatures fall below 0°C, but the summers are pretty hot; sub-Mediterranean climate in south western Slovenia, stretching from the sea coast to the high Dinaric karst plains - temperatures usually remain above 0°C throughout the year since the proximity of the sea moderates both winter cold and summer heat.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Slovenia is the third most forested country in Europe. Over 60% of its surface is covered by forests, both deciduous and coniferous. A third of the territory of Slovenia belongs to the European Nature Protection Scheme - Natura 2000. 12.6% of the Slovene countryside is included in the protected areas. The greatest single protected area is the Triglav National Park (83,807 ha).

The natural forest is only 60 km from the capital. Wild animals, like deer, squirrels, edible dormouse, are seen in the edges of forests located close to the towns. Slovenia's forests also boast some 799 brown bears, the greatest number in Europe. Most of these avoid humans, so it is unlikely that you will encounter a wild one.

Many rare and endangered species of animals, such as wolves, lynx, wildcats, wild grouse and pheasants also live in the forests, while on the mountains we may encounter ibex; all of these animals are protected species.

Many species of birds nest in the country; many more migrate from all over Europe, sleeping here during migration. The greatest numbers of birds can be observed in various regional parks. The Kranj bee is a native species of bee of which Slovenia is proud.

Slovene rivers, lakes and seas are rich in fish; its fresh waters harbor also many freshwater crabs. The karst underworld furnishes a home to the world famous "human fish", (proteus anguinus or white salamander).

HISTORY

Prehistoric times

The territory of modern Slovenia lies at the heart of Europe, at the meeting point of three European groups: the Germanic, the Slav and the Roman. It was already inhabited by 2500 BC, as can be demonstrated by finds from prehistoric times. Remnants of a Neanderthal whistle, found in the Divje Babe cave under the edge of the Šebrelj Plain above the Idrijca River, have been found by experts to be around 43,000 years old and probably come from what is likely the world's oldest surviving musical instrument.

8th to 1st Centuries before Christian Era (BC)

In the Hallstatt cultural era (8th to 6th centuries BC) Illyrians tribes lived here and in the 3rd century BC so did the Indo-European Celts. During the 2nd and 1st centuries BC these came under pressure from the Romans and from Germanic tribes. The Romans came from the south, suppressed resistance from the inhabitants and settled their land. The colonized land was divided into provinces and gradually, in co-habitation with the natives, created its own cultural and civic norms. The prehistoric trade routes became Roman roads, along which military camps and towns sprang up (e.g. Celeia, Poetovio, Emona, Nauportus, Longaticum in what is today Slovenia, and Virunum in the Koroška region of modern Austria).

Christian Era

Soldiers and traders from the east introduced the cult of Mithras; this spread through the eastern provinces around the modern city of Ptuj, where Mithraic relics can still be found today. There are traces of Christianity dating back to the 1st CE, with the arrival in Koštabona of Deacon Elijah in 46 CE and his martyrdom in 56 CE. We know that there were Christians along the Adriatic coast at least by the 3rd century, while there were bishops in Capris - present day Koper - and in Emona (Ljubljana), in the 4th century. The first reliably known writer on Slovene

soil was the author of a commentary on the Holy Scriptures in Latin, Victorinus of Ptuj (d. 304). Stridon, an area which has still not been reliably defined geographically but which was probably located in Slovenia, was the birthplace of St Jerome, author of the Vulgate, the early 5th century Latin translation of the Bible.

During a period of massive migrations in the 5th century, the nomadic Huns pushed their way into Slovene territory and settled in Pannonia and Dalmatia, while in the 6th century the Lombards and Franks arrived, followed by the Avars. They, in turn, were followed by the Slavs, from the Moravian area, who settled in a broad region east of the Alps. All of these brought their own pagan beliefs with them.

The Carantania region, in which ancestors of the Slovenes also lived, was annexed by the Frankish king, Charlemagne, from the 8th century onwards, which means that they were in touch with the western feudal world. A new wave of Christianity was spread from the churches in Aquileia and Salzburg in the 8th century, under the leadership of Irish monks who respected the languages of the local peoples. Therefore, around the year 1000, the first preserved scriptures in Slovene and the oldest writings in Latin script in any Slav language, the so-called Brižinski spomeniki or Freising manuscripts came into existence. These are conserved today in the Bavarian State Library in Munich.

From 13th to 19th centuries

In the 13th century the Hapsburg (Austro-Hungarian) dynasty started to govern Slovene territories; they governed Slovenia until the end of the First World War in 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated.

The 15th and 16th centuries were characterized by Turkish attacks, which caused considerable upheavals in rural agricultural areas, since the Turkish troops plundered and murdered throughout Slovene regions, seizing many boys and training them as soldiers.

In the late medieval era all education in the region of Slovenia was in Latin or to a lesser extent in German, while Slovene was the everyday language of the people. The cultural role of cities in Western Europe was played in Slovenia by the Monasteries Stična, Kostanjevica on Krka, Žiže with their wealthy libraries.

In the mid-16th century in Slovenia Primož Trubar, the so-called “Slovene Martin Luther”, introduced a heavily Lutheran Reformation movement and laid the foundations of Slovene literature and literary language thus defining Slovene as a language. In the years 1550/51 the first Slovene-language books were printed, and by 1584 the Slovenes had their own translation of the Bible by the Protestant Jurij (George) Dalmatin.

In the early 17th century, royal absolutism and the Catholic Church opposed Protestantism.

In the period of the Enlightened Despots in the 18th century, serfdom was abolished, Jews and Protestants were allowed to settle here, the first census of the population was made and generalized compulsory schooling was introduced with the first three years being taught in Slovene (1774).

At the end of the 18th, century the Napoleonic wars reached Slovenia and for a short time (1809-1813) French forces occupied parts of the territory. Ljubljana then became the capital of the Illyrian Provinces. After the defeat of Napoleon (1815) and in the period up to the 1848

Revolution, modernization of villages and industrialization brought the first railway line connecting Slovenia to Vienna and Trieste. In the spring of European nationalism in 1848, the first Slovene political program was set up to unite all those regions settled by Slovenes in a single country, under the wing of the Hapsburg monarchy.

20th and 21st centuries

The 1st First World War imposed many losses. Under the Entente Cordiale between the wars, Slovene regions were divided between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Italy. There are still Slovene speakers in the Trieste region of Italy. Under fascism, Slovenes in the Italian zone suffered violent italianization in the years between the two wars and even more during World War II. The other part of Slovenia, being occupied by the Germans, suffered violent germanization. Although Yugoslavia acceded to the 1941 Tripartite Pact, a resistance movement led by the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation and its military wing known as Partisans, very quickly appeared and fight the occupiers (Italy, Germany, Hungary).

After the liberation in 1945, the tactics of the Communist party, following Soviet example, led to the so-called post war extra-judicial massacre of Slovene civil and military personnel and labor and concentration camp returnees. To date, around 600 mass-burial sites have been identified under the leadership of the Commission on Concealed Mass Graves.

After World War II, Slovenia was one of the six federal states of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), which in 1963 changed its name to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and entered history as a non-aligned state under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito.

The communist system was severely shaken after the death of Tito and the split between the Centralists and the Federalists political groups in the 1980s. Slovenes called for a democratization and reorganization of Yugoslav states, later adding to this a demand for recognition of human rights and freedom, including political pluralism.

Since the Slovene demands were ignored by Yugoslavia, Slovene Communists walked out of the Yugoslav Communist Party conference in Belgrade in January 1990. In the Slovene plebiscite on December 23rd 1990, in which 93.2% of all those entitled to vote participated, 95% (88.2% of the electorate) voted in favor of Slovene independence. On June 25th 1991 Slovenia declared itself an independent multi-party Republic, which led to a nine-day war with members of the Yugoslav army. Slovenia successfully defended itself and other Yugoslav military were repatriated by sea from Koper. By 1992, the SFRY had collapsed during the Yugoslav wars.

Among the first to recognize the new country were Germany and the Vatican. The European Community recognized it in mid-January 1992; the United Nations accepted it as a member in May 1992. In March 2004 Slovenia became a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and in May acceded to the European Union. On January 1st 2007, it adopted the EURO, and in the first half of 2008 held the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers.

Today, Slovenia is a democratic parliamentary republic, the government is led by the Prime Minister, assisted by other ministers; the electoral system is proportional representation. The President is elected every five years; Borut Pahor is the current president (2017).

The government is the executive body, laws are enacted by the Parliament and the Judicial Authority is separate from both the legislative and executive bodies. The two houses of

Parliament are called Državni zbor and Državni svet (National Assembly and National Council). The first has 90 seats, and includes representatives from both of Slovenia's minorities, the Italian and the Hungarian. The National Council has 40 seats; it represents important economic, social, professional and regional groups.

ECONOMY

The majority of farms in Slovenia are small family holdings using extensive farming methods. Due to unfavorable conditions for arable farming, the greater part of agriculture is animal husbandry based on permanent grassland, some of the fodder for livestock also being produced in the fields. Most important is milk production.

Farms have developed a range of additional activities, such as homemade produce to improve their sales. Farms also contribute to conserving biodiversity, natural assets and typical cultural areas. This is not always easy to achieve, since, despite measures taken under agricultural policy - which also include direct payments to farmers - the area used for farming continue to drop due to abandoned farms, growth of urban areas and transport infrastructure.

Since its independence in 1991, Slovenia has continued to be the wealthiest and most politically open country of the former Yugoslav republics. (Although Slovenia represented only 8% of the total population of Yugoslavia, they exported almost 1/3 of all exported goods and created 20% of Yugoslavia's Gross Domestic Product). Its principal trading partners are Germany, Italy, Croatia, Austria and France.

The independent Slovenia adopted the market-based economy but found itself in recession since the European Union and United States financial crisis (2008-2009). In 2015, the unemployment level was 12%, even though only 14, 5% of the population is below the poverty level (while European Union average is 17, 2%).

Almost two thirds of the population is employed in the services sector, one third in industry and construction. The main industries are the production of motor vehicles, electric and electronic equipment, machinery, wood products, the pharmaceutical industry and commodity production.

CUISINE

In the past, country people simply ate what they produced, primarily potatoes, beans, cabbage and turnips, which they also pickled. Fresh meat was eaten only on Sundays and feast days, otherwise a small piece of meat (or just bones) was used to flavor a vegetable stew. Meat was processed: smoked (ham), air dried (pršut) or encased in fat (tunka) or turned into sausages (Kranj sausage). Some of these products now have protected status in the EU based on their origin or geographical names.

Fish were eaten only on the coast. There were also many cereal products, from barley, millet and buckwheat; bread was baked in a variety of forms (Belokranjska pogača). In the towns the cuisine was similar to that of Vienna, since Slovenia was a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy for centuries.

A typical Slovene Sunday lunch would consist of beef broth with dumplings, roast chicken, potatoes and green salad. For feast days a variety of cakes would be baked; most characteristic of these being walnut potica (see recipe on the Children's program). For picnics a grilled sausage-shaped meat patty (čevapčiči), which was adopted from the cuisine of the former

Yugoslavia. Slovenia produces red (Teran) and white wines, one speciality being cviček. We have also a number of mineral water springs.

EDUCATION

By law, all should have access to education. It is free at all levels above kindergarten. Parents pay according to their means, up to a maximum of 80% of the economic cost for schooling children from 1 to 6 years of age.

Primary school attendance has been compulsory since the 18th century (Maria-Theresa's reform) and this applies to all children between 6 and 15 years. We have 452 national primary schools, 5 private and 28 for children with special needs.

For young people over 15, there are 211 educational programs in 182 public and 5 private secondary schools. You can choose between general educations, vocational, technical-vocational and specialized education. There are 5 universities - of which 3 are public and 2 are privately owned - and 40 higher educational institutions.

Women have the same access to education as men, as is seen in the very similar figures for students, graduates and doctoral students in the universities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Social welfare provides access to health services, social assistance, and education to people in need. The unemployed, elderly, persons going through exceptional circumstances (like death in the family) are entitled to financial help.

The State assigns 9.2% of GDP to health. Most health care is provided by public institutions, even though people need to pay for supplementary insurance and to wait to access the service. For those whose insurance is unpaid, there are 4 pro bono outpatient services, funded by donations. The State offers free screening for early detection of cancer for certain age groups, and special care to the elderly and to those with physical and mental development needs.

As in many other countries, drug abuse is a problem, the most important drug being alcohol. There exist a number of programs initiated by health and welfare services as well as by private initiative (AA, communes for drug addicts), trying to help them and their families.

Slovenian women to a great extent decide for themselves when they will have children. Contraceptives and gynecological health care are free of charge under the obligatory health insurance; abortions are legal and are carried out after medical consultation in gynecological clinics. Close to 60% of women give birth to one or two children, 15% have three or more, 25% have no children.

Slightly less than half of the population over twenty is married, about 8% cohabit with a partner. Due to access to free education but low paid jobs, high prices housing and the general socioeconomic conditions in the country, young people tend to live longer with their parents. The average age of first-time brides is almost 30 years, while their grooms are 2.8 years older. The average age of women having their first child is also increasing: in 2000 it was 26.5 years, now it is above 28.5 years and less than a quarter of children are born to mothers under 25 years. In general there is an increase in the numbers of children born to unmarried couples: today these exceed 58% of live births.

Parents can receive children's allowances for minors under 18 years of age. Working women have the right to take maternity leave from a month before the birth until the child's first birthday, during which time they receive a maternity payment equal to their wage/salary. They are also entitled to a single additional payment when the child is born. Fathers may also request paternity leave. Mothers of 4 or more children may stay at home until the youngest child is 10. During this period all their social insurance contributions are paid by the State.

Retired grandparents, especially grandmothers, help their offspring, usually unemployed or on seasonal wages to care for their children. They frequently collect the children from school or nursery, look after them when they are sick, or keep children overnight when parent(s) are working night shifts. Also due to low levels of pensions many of these grandparents are themselves having to work at least part time.

Unemployment and homelessness were virtually unknown under the socialist regime, which makes them even more devastating for those now affected by either or both.

RELIGION

As mentioned in the history session, Slovenia has long seen different cults and religions brought from different peoples and cultures. Even though the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century was hit by the Counter Reformation, the most singular contribution of the Reformation is at the core of the Slovene identity – the first books and the Sacred Scriptures in Slovene language by Primož Trubar and Jurij Dalmatin.

During the Communist government after World War II, religious convictions became undesirable. Imprisonment and persecution restricted access to jobs; and discrimination were experienced by believers. Following the independence of Slovenia in 1991, the religious institutions regained their social role even though culturally still some prejudices remain.

According to the 2002 Census of the Population (in which replying to the question on religious affiliation was optional) the four strongest religious groups in Slovenia are Roman Catholic (approx. 60%), Orthodox and Islam (each 2.5%) and Lutheran (approx. 1 %).

Members of the Serbian and Macedonian Orthodox Churches and Islam come from the former Yugoslavia who migrated to Slovenia to work on the industries. The Lutheran Church is mostly found among the Hungarian communities in the north-eastern Prekmurje region.

After independence, Slovenia government recognized the cultural contribution of Protestants by making October 31st, Reformation Day, a national holiday. However, there is no religious education in schools; all takes place in the parishes.

WOMEN

Women are 50, 5% e of the population of Slovenia, as they have a slightly longer life-span than men. Predicted life expectancy of girls born after the year 2000 is 82 years.

Female employment level is close to 65%, which is 8% lower than for men. More than 92% of working women work full time. Women are almost equally present in public services and teaching - including among senior officials (48.5%) and third level teachers (37.8%), and the majority in the health and social services, although their remuneration is on average 7% lower than for men. One exception is in the construction and transport industries, where only 10% are women, but these have more demanding and higher paid jobs than the men.

Many women, particularly in rural areas, have to drive themselves to work, usually in their own cars. Therefore, in the population aged 18 or more, driving licenses are only 15% less frequent for women than for men.

In families and partnerships in which both parents work, care for house and children are usually shared between them and by the grandparents. Although still, often, mothers on average carry a much heavier burden of domestic tasks such as buying and cooking food, house cleaning, laundry and helping children with their homework.

WDP SLOVENIA

The first Slovenian World Day of Prayer service was held in Rogaska Slatina in 2000. It was organized by Mrs. Ljudmila Schmidt Šemerl from Switzerland, who encouraged other communities, including Velike Lašče, to join the WDP. In parallel, in 2001, a bi-lingual service in German and Slovenian was organized by Mrs. Corinna Harbig in Ljubljana.

In autumn of 2001, Mrs. Corinna Harbig, WDP liaison for Slovenia, brought together the organizers from Rogaska Slatina, Murska Sobota, Maribor, and Ljubljana at a meeting dedicated to planning for the future of the WDP in Slovenia. They established the practice of joint preparation and central translation of the worship service and resource materials. In January 2002, Mrs. Harbig organized the first preparatory seminar, which was attended by women from Ljubljana, Rogaska Slatina, Murska Sobota, and Maribor. During the weekend workshop in Planina, in January 2004, the Europe regional representative, Mrs. Inge-Lise Lollike, from Denmark, introduced the perspective of the International Committee of WDP. Today the WDP is celebrated in 6 locations in Slovenia, involving around 100 collaborators and attended by around 500 persons.

The WDP women are mainly from Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal, and evangelical churches. Tanja Povšnar has been the liaison since 2013. The national committee meets regularly twice a year (preparation workshop in January and evaluation after the services), if needed a smaller group meets more often in Ljubljana. Slovenia follows the WDP motto – “Informed prayer. Prayerful action.” For the following years, WDP Slovenia would like to focus on promoting WDP, organizing new groups for children’s service and increasing the participation of young women.

This material is part of the worship service and educational resource for the 2019 WDP annual celebration.

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