

„Bei uns ist immer was los!“

## DAYS IN CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION / TAGE ZUR WEIHNACHTSFEIER

### HEILIGER ABEND / CHRISTMAS EVE der 24. Dezember

24. Dezember - **Heiligabend**, Christmas Eve is the most important time of the Germanic celebration. No waiting for Santa Claus to come down the chimney. The presents (from the **Christkindl**, Christ Child) are opened under the tree that night (an event known as **die Bescherung**). Christmas dinner usually comes after that. In religious families, attending midnight Christmas mass (**Christmette**) is also a part of the celebration.

#### Heiliger Abend - 24. Dezember

Christmas Eve is now the most important day of the German celebration. But there's no Santa Claus coming down the chimney (and no chimney!), no reindeer (the German Santa rides a white horse), no waiting for Christmas morning! Families with young children often keep the living room closed off, revealing the Christmas tree to the excited youngsters only at the last minute. The decorated **Tannenbaum** is the center of the **Bescherung**, the exchanging of gifts, which takes place on Christmas Eve, either before or after dinner. Neither Santa Claus nor St. Nicholas brings children their gifts for Christmas. In most regions, the angelic **Christkindl** or the more secular **Weihnachtsmann** is the bringer of gifts that don't come from other family members or friends.

In religious families, there also may be readings of Christmas-related passages from the Bible. Many people attend midnight mass (**Christmette**), where they sing carols, much as on the occasion of the first Christmas Eve performance of "Stille Nacht" ("Silent Night") in Oberndorf, Austria in 1818.

The night before the Christmas feast is Holy Night. All the people are at home and celebrate the feast. The streets have become completely silent. Holy Night has begun.

On Heiligabend (Christmas Eve), a ritual ceremony takes place. In the "Christmas Room", usually the parlor, a tree is erected. On Christmas Eve the tree is decorated with balls, gingerbread cookies, and strips of tinfoil. The top is decorated with a star or an angel symbolizing the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. A manger scene is found under the tree. Unlike in America, there are no lights on the tree, but white candles are clipped onto the branches. They are not lit until Christmas Eve when Christ, the Light of the World, arrives.

In der Schule singt man Weihnachtslieder<sup>o</sup> und die Kinder machen Geschenke für ihre Eltern. Dann kommt der vierundzwanzigste Dezember. Die Kinder machen das letzte<sup>o</sup> Fenster am Adventskalender auf. Am Nachmittag kocht die Mutter ein großes Essen und der Vater schmückt<sup>o</sup> den Weihnachtsbaum.<sup>o</sup> Dann klingelt im Wohnzimmer eine kleine Glocke<sup>o</sup> und die Kinder dürfen ins Zimmer gehen. Die Kerzen<sup>o</sup> brennen<sup>o</sup> am Weihnachtsbaum und die Geschenke liegen auf dem Tisch. Kleine Kinder glauben, der Weihnachtsmann<sup>o</sup> oder das Christkind bringen die Geschenke. Die Familie singt zusammen das Weihnachtslied „Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht.“<sup>o</sup> Dann wünschen alle einander „Fröhliche<sup>o</sup> Weihnachten!“ und machen die Geschenke auf. Um Mitternacht gehen manche Familien in die Kirche.<sup>o</sup>