

## A LETTER FROM THE WALDORF KINDERGARTEN IN SARAJEVO

by Leila Kostić



Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina

I will try to describe our activity as clearly and concretely as possible. You know, in Sarajevo we always joke when we talk about organizing our festivals, saying: „why should it be simple when it can also be complicated?“ This is a saying one often hears in Sarajevo, and it also fits our festival preparations....

We celebrate Advent with a beautiful advent seasonal table, advent wreath and play a Christmas play at circle time. The children look forward to this, especially to the costumes of Mary, Joseph, the angel, the donkey, and so on.



In this play, we also sing many and quite diverse songs from the Catholic Croatian tradition as well as from the Serbian Orthodox tradition. And then there are songs sung traditionally by the Protestants – the Protestant church does not have such a long tradition here as the other two, but there are children of Protestant parents in the kindergarten, and this must be respected.

In addition, the Jewish festival of Hanukkah always falls in the Advent time. And the parents of Jewish origin bring cakes and sweets that are traditional for this festival in our region. Every day we light a candle in the window for the Hanukkah festival – for eight days, every day a new candle in the Menorah is lit. We also sing Hebrew songs like „Hava Nagila“ (Let us Rejoice) and others, but we do not explain these things to the children. We allow them to experience the beautiful atmosphere with all their senses, and naturally we look forward to the sweet cakes from the parents.

Throughout this time, the daily Christmas play continues – each day our Bethlehem stable is illuminated by more and more light from the eight candles from the Jewish menorah.

We celebrate Christmas in the kindergarten together with the parents. Parents who celebrate Christmas organize and prepare the festival together with the kindergarten teachers. But it often also happens that Muslim parents help, for example with baking the cakes. The question „who has time to bake?“ becomes more important than the question of one's background and traditions ...



All the festivals in the kindergarten that are connected with a particular religion, such as Christmas (Protestant and Catholic), Hanukkah, Easter, Bayram or Kurban Bayramare, are celebrated as simply as possible.

We also celebrate a festival for each season – winter, spring, summer and fall. We always have these seasonal celebrations on Saturdays, together with the parents and with lots of games for the children. After the end of Socialism and especially after World War II, religious festivals have become very popular. There is a lot of consumerism and hustle and bustle, and everything is very external and superficial. Therefore we say to the parents, we will sing and celebrate with the children with elements from our rich traditions, but will try to do so as simply and peacefully as possible.

This year we plan to do a Christmas Play with the children; the parents will experience the play and then we will all go outdoors. There we will spend a half hour in the garden and the children can play – hopefully there will be snow. And the parents who have baked something will place it outside on a table. Of course there will be cakes, which are traditional for the Catholic and Orthodox families. Together we will sing a few Christmas carols, and then after an hour, the celebration is over.

A really big festival is the Winter Festival, which takes place around New Year. Father Frost comes to the kindergarten and brings presents for all the children, regardless of



whether they are from Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or atheist families. I can describe this festival another time.

For us it is clear with the festivals, that it is VERY important to cultivate the sense of balance and the sense of touch, not only for the children but also for the parents. So: „why should it be simply, if it can also be complicated?“

With loving wishes from  
Leila

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Luna Kostić is from Bosnia. She studied Waldorf early childhood education in Kassel, Germany. She now works in the Sarajevo Waldorf Kindergarten that she helped to found.

