

St Gregory's Day: Love Is in the Water

"We always walk ¹hand in hand
in sun and ²heavy rain,
where you stand, I also stand,
our ³hug is stronger than a ⁴chain."



An average American person spends around 200 dollars on Valentine's Day gifts for their loved ones. People mostly give flowers, soft toys and sweets. On Valentine's Day, shops sell at least 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolates. Valentine's Day is perhaps the most famous festival for people in love, but certainly not the only one. In Slovenia, lovers celebrate their special bond on 12th March, also known as St Gregory's Day. Saint Gregory is the patron saint of musicians, singers, students and teachers. St Gregory's Day isn't about chocolates, perfume and expensive gifts, but about light, love and birds.



People once believed that on St Gregory's Day, sunlight and warmth finally returned after the cold and dark winter. The days were longer and they needed less light. To celebrate this day, children still 'throw lamps into the water'. They build *gregorčki* – little homemade boats – and put candles on them. On the evening of St Gregory's Day, they gather by rivers and streams, light the candles on the boats and put them into the water. On a clear night, the floating lights look like stars in the sky and are truly magical. No wonder people feel warmth, hope and love when they watch *gregorčki* slowly disappear into the darkness.

St Gregory's Day is also the time of year when birds sing and look for their mates. Birds are a symbol of new love and of young couples that later get married and build their own nests. We do not need a lot of money to celebrate lovers' festivals such as Valentine's Day or St Gregory's Day. All we need is to take time for each other.