Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

*Ivan Franko National University of L'viv*

**presentation**

**THE CAROL “ GOOD KING WENCESLAS”**

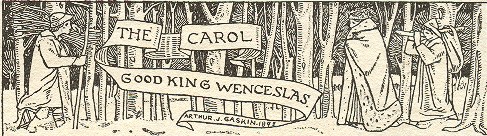
**Prepered** **by**

**Student of**

**Electronics Faculty**

**Vira Lytvyn**

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**GOOD KING WENCESLAS  LYRICS**

*[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tempus_adest_floridum.jpg)Good King Wenceslas looked out  
On the feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about  
Deep and crisp and even  
Brightly shone the moon that night  
Though the frost was cruel  
When a poor man came in sight  
Gath'ring winter fuel*

*"Hither, page, and stand by me  
If thou know'st it, telling  
Yonder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?"  
"Sire, he lives a good league hence  
Underneath the mountain  
Right against the forest fence  
By Saint Agnes' fountain."*

*"Bring me flesh and bring me wine  
Bring me pine logs hither  
Thou and I will see him dine  
When we bear him thither."  
Page and monarch forth they went  
Forth they went together  
Through the rude wind's wild lament  
And the bitter weather*

*"Sire, the night is darker now  
And the wind blows stronger  
Fails my heart, I know not how,  
I can go no longer."  
"Mark my footsteps, my good page  
Tread thou in them boldly  
Thou shalt find the winter's rage  
Freeze thy blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod  
Where the snow lay dinted  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the Saint had printed  
Therefore, Christian men, be sure  
Wealth or rank possessing  
Ye who now will bless the poor  
Shall yourselves find blessing*

**ST. WENCESLAS I., DUKE OF THE CZECH LANDS**

Wenceslas was born to the royal Premysl dynasty of Bohemia (current part of the Czech Republic). The dynasty united the warring tribes of Bohemia into one duchy. The first known Premysl ruler was Wenceslas's grandfather, Duke Borivoy I, who made Prague Castle the family seat. He married a Slav princess named Ludmila, and both eventually became Christians. When Borivoy died he was succeeded by his sons, Ratislav and Spythinev. Ratislav was Wenceslas's father.

Wenceslas was born around 907 in the castle of Stochov near Prague. At first Wenceslas was raised by his grandmother, Ludmila. Then, when he was about 13 years old, his father died. Wenceslas succeeded him as duke. But because he was too young to rule, his mother, Drahomira, became regent. Drahomira was opposed to Christianity and used her new power to persecute followers of the religion. She refused to let Wenceslas see Ludmila because she was afraid they would scheme to overthrow her. Not long after Ratislav's death, Ludmila was murdered at Tetin Castle - strangled, it is said, at Drahomira's command. After her death Ludmila was revered as a saint.

But the loss of his grandmother did not stop Wenceslas from seizing power. At the age of 18 he overthrew his mother's regency, just as she had feared, and began to rule for himself. A stern but fair monarch, he stopped the persecution of priests and tamed the rebellious nobility. He was known for his kindness to the poor. Many of the Bohemian nobles resented Wenceslas's attempts to spread Christianity, and were displeased when he swore allegiance to the king of Germany, Henry I.

The duke's most deadly enemy proved to be his own brother, Boleslav, who joined the nobles who were plotting his brother's assassination. He invited Wenceslas in 935 AD to a religious festival and then attacked him on his way to mass. As the two were struggling, Boleslav's supporters jumped in and murdered Wenceslas. Wenceslas became Bohemia's most famous martyr and patron saint.

**LEGENDS ABOUT ST. WENCESLAS**

**KNIGHTS OF BLANIK**

There are Knights in the Blanik hill who are waiting for their moment to help the Czech nation and establish peace and order in bad times. In those times, St. Wenceslas will appear at the Charles Bridge in Prague in the company of the Knights. Wenceslas's horse will dig out the magical sword hidden in one of pillars. With this sword, St. Wenceslas will cut off the enemies's heads and there will be peace forever.

**THE STATUE OF ST. WENCESLAS ON WENCESLAS  SQUARE IN PRAGUE**

There is a similar legend in Prague, which says that when the Motherland is in danger or in its darkest times and close to ruin, the statue of King Wenceslaus in Wenceslas Square will come to life and raise the army sleeping in Blanik.

**HISTORICAL LANDMARKS REMINDING ST. WENCESLAS**

[Wenceslas statue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Bridge) at Charles Bridge in Prague  
[Wenceslas Square](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wenceslas_Square) in Prague, named after Saint Wenceslas.  
[Statue of St. Wenceslas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_Trinity_Column_-_Saint_Wenceslaus.jpg) by the Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc   
[St. Vitus Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Vitus_Cathedral) founded by Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia

**GOOD KING WENCESLAS - STORY OF THE CAROL**

One of the best loved Christmas Carols is Good King Wenceslas. Although originally spring tune from Sweden, first published in the 16th century and sung with Latin text translated as Spring has unwrapped her flowers, John Mason Neale chose Wenceslas as the subject for a children's song to exemplify generosity. It quickly became a Christmas favorite.

[Play the carol Good King Wenceslas](http://www.soundclick.com/util/streamM3U.m3u?ID=702163&q=Hi), see the [sheet music](http://www.christmas-carol-music.org/SATB/GoodKingWenceslas.pdf) and for lyrics, see below.

**WHO WAS KING WENCESLAS?**

Wenceslas was the Duke of Bohemia and murdered in 935 AD by his wicked younger brother, Boleslav. As the song indicates, he was a good, honest, and strongly principled man. He became the Patron Saint of the Czech Republic and his Saint's day is September 28th. His picture appeared on Bohemian coins, and the Crown of Wenceslas became the symbol of Czech independence.

**FAME OF GOOD KING WENCESLAS CAROL**

The carol is famous even in the east India.

In 1983, The Beatles performed several brief renditions of the carol, in a variety of arrangements. At one point, John Lennon sang a humorous set of lyrics, mentioning several Hollywood stars. This recording was later included on The Beatles' Christmas Album.

In Christopher Moore's novel "The stupidest Angel", one zombie keeps asking for the lyrics to "Good King Wenceslas".

**BOOKS ABOUT GOOD KING WENCESLAS**

* [Good King Wenceslas by Pauline Baynes](http://www.amazon.com/Good-Wenceslas-First-Books-Lutterworth/dp/0718826329)
* [Good King Wenceslas by John M. Neale](http://www.amazon.com/Good-King-Wenceslas-John-Neale/dp/0802852092)

"**Good King Wenceslas**" is a popular [Christmas carol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_carol) about a king who goes out to give [alms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alms) to a poor [peasant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peasant) on [the Feast of Stephen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Stephen%27s_Day) (the second day of [Christmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas), December 26). During the journey, his [page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Page_(servant)) is about to give up the struggle against the cold weather, but is enabled to continue by the heat [miraculously](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle) emanating from the king's footprints in the snow. The legend is based on the life of the historical [Saint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint)[Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wenceslaus_I,_Duke_of_Bohemia) (907–935), known in the [Czech language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_language) as *Svatý Václav*.

In 1853, English hymnwriter [John Mason Neale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Mason_Neale) wrote the "Wenceslas" lyrics, in collaboration with his music editor [Thomas Helmore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Helmore), and the[carol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carol_(music)) first appeared in *Carols for Christmas-Tide*, 1853.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-0)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-1) Neales' lyrics were set to a tune based on a 13th century [spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_(season)) carol "***Tempus adest floridum***" ("It is time for flowering") first published in the 1582 [Finnish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland) song collection *[Piae Cantiones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piae_Cantiones)*.

[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Good_King_Wenceslas&action=edit&section=1)]Source legend

Wenceslas was considered a [martyr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) and a [saint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint) immediately after his death, when a cult of Wenceslas grew up in [Bohemia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemia) and in [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-2)Within a few decades of Wenceslas's death four biographies of him were in circulation.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-3)[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-4) These [hagiographies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagiography) had a powerful influence on the [High Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Middle_Ages) conceptualization of the *rex justus*, or "righteous king"—that is, a [monarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch) whose power stems mainly from his great piety, as well as from his princely vigor.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-5)

Referring approvingly to these hagiographies, the chronicler [Cosmas of Prague](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmas_of_Prague), writing in about the year 1119, states:[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas" \l "cite_note-6)

But his deeds I think you know better than I could tell you; for, as is read in his *Passion*, no one doubts that, rising every night from his noble bed, with bare feet and only one chamberlain, he went around to God’s churches and gave alms generously to widows, orphans, those in prison and afflicted by every difficulty, so much so that he was considered, not a prince, but the father of all the wretched.

Several centuries later the legend was claimed as fact by [Pope Pius II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_II),[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas" \l "cite_note-7) who himself also walked ten miles barefoot in the ice and snow as an act of pious thanksgiving.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-8)

Although Wenceslas was, during his lifetime, only a duke, Holy Roman Emperor [Otto I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_I,_Holy_Roman_Emperor) posthumously "conferred on [Wenceslas] the regal dignity and title" and that is why, in the legend and song, he is referred to as a "king".[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-9) The usual English spelling of Duke Wenceslas's name, *Wenceslaus*, is occasionally encountered in later textual variants of the carol, although it was not used by Neale in his version.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-10) Wenceslas is not to be confused with King [Wenceslaus I of Bohemia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wenceslaus_I_of_Bohemia) (Wenceslaus I Premyslid), who lived more than three centuries later.

[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Good_King_Wenceslas&action=edit&section=2)]Authorship

[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Good_King_Wenceslas&action=edit&section=3)]***Tempus adest floridum***

The tune is that of "*Tempus adest floridum*" ("It is time for flowering"), a 13th-century spring [carol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carol_(music)) first published in the [Finnish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland) song book *[Piae Cantiones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piae_Cantiones)* in 1582. *Piae Cantiones* is a collection of seventy-four songs compiled by Jaakko Suomalainen, the Protestant headmaster of [Turku Cathedral School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turku_Cathedral_School), and published by Theodoric Petri, a young Catholic printer. The book is a unique document of European songs intended not only for use in church, but also schools, thus making the collection a unique record of [secular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular) (as opposed to sacred), children's songs of the late medieval period.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-11)

A text beginning substantially the same as the 1582 "Piae" version is also found in the German manuscript collection *[Carmina Burana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmina_Burana)* as *CB 142*, where it is substantially more carnal; *CB 142* has clerics and virgins playing the game of Venus in the meadows, while in the *Piae* version they are praising the Lord from the bottom of their hearts.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-12)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-13)

The text of Neale's carol bear no relationship to the words of "Tempus Adest Floridum".[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-14) In or around 1853, G. J. R. Gordon, her majesty's envoy and minister in [Stockholm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm), gave a rare copy of the 1582 edition of *Piae Cantiones* to [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) [hymnwriter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymnwriter" \o "Hymnwriter) [John Mason Neale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Mason_Neale), Warden of [Sackville College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sackville_College), [East Grinstead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Grinstead), [Sussex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sussex) and to the Reverend [Thomas Helmore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Helmore) (Vice-Principal of St. Mark's College, [Chelsea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelsea,_London)). The book was entirely unknown in [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) at that time. Neale translated some of the carols and [hymns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn), and in 1853, he and Helmore published twelve carols in *Carols for Christmas-tide* (with music from *Piae Cantiones*). In 1854, they published a dozen more in *Carols for Easter-tide* and it was in these collections that Neale's original hymn was first published.

[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Good_King_Wenceslas&action=edit&section=4)]**Neale's carol**

John Mason Neale published the carol "Good King Wenceslas" in 1853, although he may have written his carol some time earlier, since he carried on the legend of St. Wenceslas (the basis of this story) in his [*Deeds of Faith*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Deeds_of_Faith&action=edit&redlink=1) (1849). Neale was known for his devotion to [High Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Church) traditions. According to older Czech sources, Neale's lyrics are a translation of a poem by Czech poet Václav Alois Svoboda, written in [Czech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_language), [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language) and[Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language). [[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-15)

The hymn consists of five [quatrains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quatrains) in the [meter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_(poetry)) [trochaic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trochee) [heptameter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heptameter). Each quatrain has the [scheme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyme_scheme) ABABCDCD with [feminine rhyme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminine_rhyme) and[internal rhyme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_rhyme). The unstressed [syllable](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syllable) of the fourth [foot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot_(prosody)) is abated in each line in favor of a [caesura](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesura), forming the line into two [hemistichs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hemistich" \o "Hemistich). In the accompanying [common time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_signature) [musical score](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_score), the caesura is attained by rendering the fourth foot as a [half note](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half_note), while the last foot of the line effectively becomes a [spondee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spondee) by being realized as two half notes. Each line is thus sung in four [measures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_(music)). Neale's words are now in the [public domain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain).[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-16)\* [MIDI recording of the melody "Tempus Adest Floridum".](http://www.hymntime.com/tch/mid/t/e/m/tempus_adest_floridum.mid)

Academics tend to be critical of Neale's textual substitution. H. J. L. J. Massé wrote in 1921:

Why, for instance, do we tolerate such impositions as "Good King Wenceslas?" The original was and is an Easter Hymn...it is marked in carol books as "traditional", a delightful word which often conceals ignorance. There is nothing traditional in it as a carol.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-17)

A similar sentiment is expressed by the editors ([Percy Dearmer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Dearmer), [Martin Shaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Shaw_(composer)) and [Ralph Vaughan Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Vaughan_Williams)) in the 1928 [*Oxford Book of Carols*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Book_of_Carols), which is even more critical of Neale's carol.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-18)

This rather confused narrative owes its popularity to the delightful tune, which is that of a Spring carol...Unfortunately Neale in 1853 substituted for the Spring carol this*Good King Wenceslas*, one of his less happy pieces, which E. Duncan goes so far as to call "doggerel", and Bullen condemns as "poor and commonplace to the last degree". The time has not yet come for a comprehensive book to discard it; but we reprint the tune in its proper setting...not without hope that, with the present wealth of carols for Christmas, *Good King Wenceslas* may gradually pass into disuse, and the tune be restored to spring-time.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-obc-19)

[Elizabeth Poston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Poston), in the *Penguin Book of Christmas Carols*, referred to it as the "product of an unnatural marriage between Victorian whimsy and the thirteenth-century dance carol". She goes on to detail how Neale's "ponderous moral doggerel" does not fit the light-hearted dance measure of the original tune, and that if performed in the correct manner "sounds ridiculous to pseudo-religious words".[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_King_Wenceslas#cite_note-20)