

Leon Novak

Leon Novak was born in 1963 and studied Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna until 1992. Prior to becoming pastor at Protestant church community in Murska Sobota, he acted as vicar for the Protestant Church in Slovenia between 1992 and 1995. He is a member of the board of supervisors for the Protestant Church in Slovenia as well as a member of the council of Christian churches in Slovenia.

The Reformation in Slovenia and its impact on national identity and language

The history of Slovenia is no history of powerful kings and peoples. The small country changed hands multiple times throughout the past centuries. Nevertheless, it always preserved its identity, language, and culture. One milestone in the country's history was the reformation. Primus Trubar, Jurij Dalmatin, and other Protestant pastors gave Slovenians their first printed books (Katechismus 1550, Evangelien, New Testament), a bible for children (1566 Sebastijan Krelj), and by doing so they spread the written language. In the Matthäusevangelium (1555) Trubar addressed readers for the very first as *Dear Slovenians*. Prior to this occurrence, there was no national identity in Slovenia. Reformers encouraged school education for all children regardless of their origin or gender. Singing was promoted through the printing of hymnbooks as well as through family prayers. Primus Trubar was eventually forced to leave his home country after having been persecuted by the Catholic church. He continued, however, his work from Germany and founded the first Bible Society in the world. Through this society, he was able to print his books - a total of 30 pieces - and further took on the position as pastor in Germany. He was buried in Derendingen, Germany. His colleague Jurij Dalmatin translates the entire Bible into the Slovenian language and had it printed in Wittenberg in 1584. After the success of the counter-reformation, many like-minded people in Europe supported the reformers in Eastern Slovenia by helping with translation work and printing of the catechism as well as the new testament. Many books were translated for Protestant children. The Reformation helped Slovenians to gain their written language, a national identity, the first printed books, the first legal paper (church constitution 1564), an education system, and the first hymnbook. Therefore, October 31st became a national holiday in Slovenia. It is prepared and organized by the government every year and draws large crowds to celebrate together the reformation.