

St. Nicolas comes to visit

To get in the mood for the Advent Season and St. Nicolas we would like to introduce the custom as well as the St. Nikolaus-Gruppe Unterägeri.

Worshipping of St. Nicolas

It is not precisely known when St. Nicolas lived. According to the source it is assumed that he was born between 270 and 288 and died on a December 6th between 340 and 352. Different sources disagree. His bones lie in the Basilika San Nicola in Bari, Italy. Every year thousands of people make the pilgrimage to this place.

Nicolas came from a wealthy family and is said to have shared his money. He is also said to having fulfilled several wonders. Therefore he is the patron saint of children, bakers and sailors. To this day he is an important figure in Christian and Christian Orthodox faith.

The worshipping of Nicolas began about the year 450 without interruption to this day. Nicolas as a warmhearted and wonderful man who wins peoples hearts. A friend of the children and the weak.

The visit of St. Nicolas every year on December 6th is a nice and old custom that needs to be kept alive in the new millennium and hopefully for many years to come!

St. Nikolaus-Gruppe Unterägeri

Researches found that in the thirties of the last century the citizen and church clerk Josef Iten, 'Hardware store' (nicknamed 'S'Weibels Josef'), was the first who visited large families on Nicolas-Day in Unterägeri. The gifts for the children in those days were nuts, fruits and ginger-bread.

Around 1940 a 'Chlausgruppe' rose out of the so-called 'Jungmannschaft' which was later continued by the catholic workers union. To this day our St. Nikolaus-Gruppe can be kept alive thanks to the local Scouts of Morgarten and many male and female volunteers.

Until 1989 the former sacristan Paul Iten lead the visits with great engagement. Then the organisation was restructured and the catholic church took the patronage. Then the St. Nikolaus-Gruppe was lead by Koni Häusler who tragically lost his life at the attack of Zug in 2001. To keep the custom going inspite of the gread loss, Walter Krienbühl quickly took the helm and lead the group with the same enthusiasm as Koni Häusler before. In 2017 Urs Baumann was elected as his successor and has chaired it ever since.

Our group is often confused with the Chlauseisel-Gruppe. Both are independent of each other, but working closely together for the same aim: To make children happy and collect money for poor families. It is important to both of our groups to support each other and keep the custom alive.

Family visits

Parents can fill in a registration form completely a few weeks before the visit. Registration forms can be found in local shops or downloaded from our website (click on Besuche).

Around the end of November you will receive a confirmation of your visit.

The closer your information, the better your visit can be prepared by St. Nicolas. Avoid embarrassing statements and set the priority on good characteristics.

St. Nicolas does not know any differences between ethnies, races or religions. He visits all children. Although we prefer the visits to be held in Swiss German, we can make visits in other languages. Please ask us first!

It is a great advantage if parents inform their children about the visit of St. Nicolas. Books like 'Sankt Nikolaus kommt auf Besuch' or 'Chum ine' by Alois von Euw are recommended and can be found in our local library.

Between December 4th and 8th our group visits more than 120 families and groups. Generally visits do not cost a given amount but we take donations which we use to help families with children in need in our valley. For other expenses we can count on the help of the catholic church in Unterägeri. For example, the expenses of one St. Nicolas and two 'Schmutzli' newly dressed is about four thousand Swiss Francs. We therefore take much care of our materials.

Education of St. Nicolas

The path to become a St. Nicolas is long and starts with a career as 'Schmutzli'. It can take years until a place as St. Nicolas is vacant. Because we visit more than 120 families and groups it takes every St. Nicolas hours in preparing each and every visit. New St. Nicolas must visit special courses to become St. Nicolas where not only the own style is taught, but also the history of St. Nicolas as bishop and many other important subjects. Further education is expected regularly. On his first day as a debutant, Nicolas is accompanied by a colleague dressed as 'Schmutzli'.

Education as Schmutzli

To become 'Schmutzli', one must be at least 14 years old, male or female. It is important that young people know their role as helping hands of St. Nicolas and that we do not visit the children for our own amusement.

The education happens on the first visit as each St. Nicolas has his own habits.

Female Schmutzli must wear black gloves and are not allowed to speak. All Schmutzli must wear black trousers and boots.

Each 'Schmutzli' has a great responsibility on tour as they must help St. Nicolas with all important informations and are also responsible that St. Nicolas is perfectly dressed at all times.

Note:

It is wonderful that we receive creative paintings or handicrafts. Of course we do not expect this. Nevertheless we keep very creative works for an exhibition in a few years time.