

## VORWEIHNACHTENSITTEN (PRE-CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS)

### Brief an das Christkind / Letter to Christ Child St. Nicholas Opens Christmas Letterbox in Germany



What a typical letter looks like.

The little town of St. Nikolaus in Germany, which is named after Saint Nicholas, better known worldwide as Santa Claus, on November 15 inaugurated a letter-answering service.

When children write polite letters to Santa Claus saying they have been well behaved and are hoping for a special present at Christmas, the German postal service delivers them to St. Nikolaus and several other towns with Christmas-like names.

St. Nikolaus answered 16,000 letters from around the globe last year, thanking every child and wishing them well.

Volunteers who empty the letterbox are able to write personal replies in German, Spanish, Russian and Polish and will be posting them to the children from December 6 to 24. The German mail service tries to find someone to answer children's letters in most languages.

St. Nikolaus is located in the tiny western German state of Saarland. The original St. Nicholas lived in what is now Turkey. Dutch immigrants to the United States spread the name of the kindly saint there as "Santa Claus."

The other towns in Germany which do similar duty have names reflecting the varying beliefs among children about where their Christmas presents come from: heaven, the angels or the infant Jesus.

In one such town, Engelskirchen (church of the angels), volunteers got down to work on Monday for the 25th year. They expect 150,000 letters.



Letters from children to the "Christkind" (Christ Child) - who brings presents to kids on the evening of December 24, the reason that folks traditionally open their presents on Christmas Eve in Germany - that were sent to the "Weihnachtspostamt" (Christmas postal station) in Himmelstadt, in the southern German state of Bavaria,