

Sinterklaas

Sinterklaas is a feast, that is primarily celebrated in the Netherlands and Belgium from half November till the 5th/6th of December. The mythical figure comes from Saint Nicholas (15 March 270 – 6 December 343) who was born in Asia minor what is now Turkey. We started celebrating Sinterklaas since the 13th century. The Christmas icon Santa Claus, which is more famous over the world, has the same origin but first came in the 19th century.

The look of Sinterklaas and Santa Claus are pretty similar. They are both elderly man with a long white beard and are dressed in red. Sinterklaas is dressed like a bishop with a red cape and mitre, a ruby ring and a shepherd's staff with a curled top. Most of the time he is accompanied by his white horse Amerigo and by his black servants, who are also called black "Piet" (or in plural "Pieten").

There has been a lot of fuss about these black helpers in the social media for the past decennia. The origin of Piet also comes from the Saint Nicholas. It is said that he bought a young black boy Petrus free and Petrus became his servant out of gratitude. Nowadays the Saint arrives with a boat full of black helpers (Pieten) and presents and sweets for the children from Spain. They say that the helpers got black because they enter the houses of the people threw the chimney to fill the shoes of the children with sweets. There have already been some changes with the black helper, because he used to carry a chimney sweep made of willow branches to spank naughty children. Nowadays he only has a burlap sack in which he carries the presents and sweeties for the good children.