



Feast of St. Nicholas

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF AN
ADVENT SAINT

December 6



WHO WAS ST. NICHOLAS?

The true story of Santa Claus begins with a man named Nicholas, who lived during the third century in the Greek village of Patara. Nicholas was born to wealthy parents, and his mother and father raised him to be a devout Christian.

When Nicholas was still young, his parents passed away, leaving the boy with a broken heart, a weighty faith, and a great deal of money. Nicholas sought to honor his parents by loving his God with all of his being and by obeying the commandments of Jesus Christ. Jesus' words to the rich young man in Matthew 19 stuck out to Nicholas in particular: "Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor." Nicholas believed Jesus was speaking to him also, and so he used his entire inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God, and, when he became a man, his fellow Christians made him a Bishop over the province of Myra in honor of his work.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who persecuted and hurt many members of the Church, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith. The Emperor had him exiled, beaten, and imprisoned. However, when Diocletian died, Nicholas was mercifully set free and allowed to return home to Myra. His faith strengthened by his persecution, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 and was instrumental in the formation of the Nicene Creed.




Through the centuries many legends have been handed down related to St. Nicholas' life and deeds.

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters who was helped by Nicholas. In those days, a young woman's father had to give money or valuables to her future husband to secure the couple's engagement. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. Unfortunately, the poor man had nothing to offer for his daughters. He worried every day what would become of them--women without husbands were not treated very nicely in those days, after all! St. Nicholas heard about the poor family and wanted to help. He dropped three bags of gold through the family's window one night, one for each daughter. The bags are said to have landed in stockings left beside the fire to dry. Thus, children now hang stockings at Christmas time, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas.

Another story tells of three children who were captured by an evil butcher. The butcher killed the children and hid their bodies. It so happened that that very week, Bishop Nicholas visited the city where the butcher lived. In the night, Nicholas dreamed of the crime, got up, and confronted the butcher. As Nicholas prayed earnestly to God, the three boys were restored to life and wholeness!

Several stories tell of Nicholas and his journeys on the sea. Nicholas often went on pilgrimages to visit





places important to the faith and to the church. After one such trip, he set sail for home with a crew of salty sailors. Along the way, a storm threatened to wreck the ship. Nicholas prayed for God's help. Suddenly, everything was still! The terrified sailors were amazed when the wind and waves calmed, sparing them all. It was a miracle in the likeness of Christ!

Other stories tell of Nicholas saving his people from famine, sparing the lives of those innocently accused, and much more. He did many kind and generous deeds in secret, expecting nothing in return.

We at All Saints join in celebrating the life of St. Nicholas, bishop, servant, protector, and confessor. This holiday season, when you think of Santa Claus, think of a godly Christian bishop who was persecuted and imprisoned for faithfully proclaiming the Gospel under the most dangerous of circumstances. Think of someone who had a sensitive pastoral heart and who cared deeply for his neighbor. Think of someone who provided support for the weak and poor, the helpless, and victims of injustice. And to top it off, think of someone whose whole purpose in life was to point people to Jesus.

Now that's my kind of Santa Claus!

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