

Saint Nicholas

- Feastday: December 6
- Patron Saint of: children, travelers, sailors, fishermen, merchants
- Birth: March 15, 270 AD
- Death: December 6, 343



"Children,
I beseech
you to
correct your
hearts and
thoughts, so that
you may
be pleasing to
God."

❖

Saint Nicholas was born in Asia Minor as an only child. Both of his parents when he was young, leaving him to be raised by his uncle who was the Bishop of Patara. Nicholas devoted his life and inheritance to works of charity, and his uncle mentored him and later ordained him as a priest. Many stories about St. Nicholas show his characteristic selflessness, as well as his devotion to the protection of children. One such story is of an impoverished father who had no money to offer as a dowry for his daughters to get married. In those days, a woman had to offer a dowry to her groom to be considered for marriage. When dowry money was unavailable, the woman would be considered unable to be married, and would often be sold into slavery. This man had three daughters and no money for any of their dowries. Horrified at the thought of having his daughters sold into slavery, the man prayed for help. St. Nicholas heard of the man's plight, and, on three separate occasions, secretly threw a bag of gold down the man's chimney. The bags of gold landed in the stockings or shoes of the family members who had placed them near the fireplace to warm. The man was able to offer the dowry his daughters needed to marry, saving them from becoming slaves. Because of this story, children began placing their stockings and shoes near

their fireplaces in hopes that St. Nicholas would leave them a gift. His feast day on December 6th was celebrated as a day of gift-giving. The idea of Santa Claus eventually emerged in the secular world as this story was passed down over time.

Nicholas was appointed the bishop of Myra and became a strong leader and defender of the faith. He helped refute the Arian heresy and was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Ancient accounts are unanimous that St. Nicholas died and was buried in his episcopal city of Myra and there was a basilica built in his honor at Constantinople.