

Living Faith Kids

NICHOLAS_{of} Myra



Amy Welborn

St. Nicholas: A Saint for Christmas



Christmas is about a lot of things, isn't it? It's about trees, lights, concerts and plays. It's about decorations, cookies, family and vacation. But most of all, Christmas is about God's great love coming into the world through the birth of Jesus.

Love came into the world when Jesus was born in a Bethlehem stable, but Jesus comes into our hearts too. When people make a place for Jesus in their hearts, they become saints, just like Nicholas did.

During Advent and Christmas, we remember stories from the Bible of people who have embraced God's love: St. John the Baptist, the shepherds and the Magi, and of course Joseph and Mary.

Nicholas, whose feast day just happens to fall during Advent on December 6, reminds us what can happen when people truly open themselves to God's love.

Stories and Prayers

Many, many stories have been told about St. Nicholas for well over a thousand years. These stories are a lot like plants which sprout from tiny seeds. The seeds are the facts we know about Nicholas; the stories are the plants that have grown from those seeds, watered by people's love of St. Nicholas and their beliefs about how he answered their prayers.

Underneath all the stories is one important truth: Nicholas loved Jesus and Jesus loved Nicholas. Reading stories about his life helps us learn how to bring the real spirit of Christmas—the spirit of Jesus' love—to the world around us.

As we read about these stories and see how Nicholas showed the love of Jesus to those around him, we will also pray that we might do the same.

St. Nicholas' Early Life

St. Nicholas was born about 17 centuries ago in a town called Patara, on the southern coast of what is now the country of Turkey. If you sailed on a boat through the Mediterranean Sea from Italy to the Holy Land, you would go right by the place where Nicholas was born!

Nicholas was something of a miracle baby: his parents had prayed many years for a child, and they were overjoyed when he was born. The Bible is filled with stories of miracle babies like Nicholas: Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac, the prophet Samuel, the great judge Samson and even John the Baptist. And all of these miracle babies—including Nicholas—grew up to be great servants of God. Loving God, help me to find the ways I can love you by serving others for your sake.

A Choice for Love

As a young man, Nicholas had a love for Jesus that led him to make an important decision: he decided to follow in his uncle's footsteps and become a priest.

Although Nicholas' family was not the richest in their city, they weren't poor, either. Nicholas inherited a good

amount of money and property. Just as you can do what you want with a gift you are given, Nicholas was able to choose how he wanted to spend his money.

His decision gives us a hint about how he would live the rest of his life. He gave every penny of his inheritance to the poor.

Jesus, help me to love you more so that I can bring your love to the world.

A Man Named Nicholas

Near Patara where Nicholas lived was a large city named Myra. When the Bishop of Myra died, the other bishops from the nearby towns gathered to decide who should replace him. After many days of meeting, they were not able to make up their minds about who should become the new bishop.

Then one of the bishops had a dream. In the dream, God told him to go to the church very early the next morning, and wait at the door. The first person to come



through that door should be chosen the new bishop of Myra—and, God promised, that person's name would be Nicholas.

The next morning, the bishop did just what he'd been told. He went to the church early and waited. As the sun rose, the door of the church opened. In walked a young man who had been visiting Myra and had come to pray in that church. His name: Nicholas!

Yes, it was our Nicholas, and though he was a young man, the leaders gathered in that church knew that God had sent them a very special person. They joyfully accepted Nicholas as their new bishop!

Jesus, please remind me to ask for your help in times of need and to trust in your promises.

Giver of Many Gifts

While Nicholas was bishop of Myra, a famine became a terrible problem for the people. If their land didn't produce food, they would have nothing to eat. Nicholas knew there were ships on their way to Egypt anchored in the harbor which were full of grain.

He went to the sailors and asked them to share one portion of grain from each ship with the people of

Myra. The sailors refused. They were afraid that the Egyptians who were expecting an exact amount of grain would punish them if they arrived with less.

Nicholas promised that no one would be punished, and sure enough, when the ships arrived in Egypt, it was as if none of the grain had been

taken at all. There was enough for everyone—in both places. Nicholas had shared God's gift of compassion.

Another problem Nicholas faced began around the year 305 when the Roman Emperor started persecuting Christians. Anyone who refused to honor the Roman gods was put in prison. Many faithful Christians in Myra were sent to prison, and Nicholas was one of them. While he lived in prison—a wretched, dark, dirty place—he helped other prisoners, bringing them the gifts of faith and hope.

Lord Jesus, may I always remember that I can trust in you, even in the hard times.



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This Advent, enjoy the traditions and stories of St. Nicholas that have been celebrated for over a thousand years! St. Nicholas of Myra, a fourth-century bishop, was legendary for his charity and love of children. Written especially for elementary school children, this booklet by *Living Faith* author Amy Welborn, emphasizes that Nicholas' love for Jesus was the motive for his concern for others. Along with a narrative about St. Nicholas and the traditions that commemorate his life, prayers are included to remind children of the miracle of God's love for us in Jesus!

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on **amazon**kindle and **nook**
by Barnes & Noble

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