

# Who is St. Nicholas?

**December 6th is the feast of St. Nick!!!!**



The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value—a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance that a young woman would find a good husband. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home—providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry.

Because of acts like this, St. Nicholas is known as a gift-giver. Help your children to model St. Nicholas' generous example of giving in secret to those in need. Encourage them to identify a kindly "Nicholas deed" to do for someone else.

The many St. Nicholas stories led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. So, before going to bed on December 5<sup>th</sup>, put out those shoes! Carrying on the rich tradition of placing shoes outside bedroom doors or on the hearth is a wonderful way to remember the great man's generosity and kindness. Be sure to add a candy treat (a candy cane represents Bishop Nicholas' crozier) and simple gift by morning on **December 6<sup>th</sup>!**