

Meet St. Nicholas! • Saints for kids

LIVED: Nicholas was born to wealthy Greek parents in the year 270 on the coast of what is now Turkey. He died on December 6, 343, in Myra, where he was bishop.

MISSION: As bishop of Myra, Nicholas devoted himself to caring for the poor and defending children. At the Council of Nicea, he defended the divinity of Christ. To Roman officials who wanted to know who he was, he fearlessly declared: "I am Nicholas, a sinner, servant of God, and bishop of Myra."

ADVENTURES: The man who would later become the basis for our modern-day "Santa Claus" was gentle with children, but tough when it came to defending truth and justice. During the persecution of Christians, Bishop Nicholas was thrown in prison and tortured. Scientists studying his skull have found his nose had been broken, probably by Roman soldiers during the bishop's time in prison.

As a young man, Nicholas made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land so he could pray at the places Jesus lived. During the voyage, a fierce storm struck the ship. "Do not fear; God will protect us," Nicholas told the sailors. Then he calmly prayed as the storm raged. Finally, the storm calmed down, but not before a sailor fell from the rigging. Nicholas prayed over the seemingly dead man, who miraculously arose as if he had only been asleep.

Another time Bishop Nicholas learned of three sisters who wanted to marry, but were unable to afford a dowry. Nicholas visited the family's home in the middle of the night, throwing a small bag of gold coins in the window. The coins landed in a pair of shoes that were drying by the fire. Nicholas did this three times, supplying enough money for all the girls to

marry.

Once, Nicholas stopped the unjust execution of three men. He grabbed the sword out of the executioner's hands, unchained the men, and brought them back to the judge to demand their pardon.

When famine struck Myra in 312 and 313, Nicholas prayed to God for help. Soon he learned of several ships that had landed nearby, laden with grain destined for Egypt. He rushed to the port and begged the captain to sell some of the grain, promising the man that he would not get in trouble for the missing amount. Very reluctantly, the captain sold some of the grain to the people of Myra.

When the grain was unloaded in Egypt, true to the good bishop's word, it weighed as much as when it had been loaded! Back in Myra, the grain was enough to feed people for two years, with enough left over for planting. It was a miracle of sharing—the sort of miracle that is especially appropriate during Advent! **M:C**

Many more legends from the life of St. Nicholas can be found at the website of the [Saint Nicholas Center](#).