

Saint Nicholas

A long time ago, in a country far away, lived a man who loved God very much.

His name was Nicholas. When he was a boy his parents told him about Jesus. Nicholas wanted to live the way Jesus taught.

When Nicholas was a teenager a terrible sickness came to his town. Many people died including his parents. Nicholas went to live with his uncle who was a bishop in the church. His uncle taught him more about God.

Nicholas' parents were rich and after they died, Nicholas was rich, too. Nicholas decided to do what Jesus said, to "sell all you have and give to the poor."

There was a man who had three daughters. The man lost his job and had no money to buy food or to care for his daughters. The daughters were old enough to get married, but they had no dowry—money and other things to give to a future husband. To save them all from starving, the father decided to sell his daughters to be slaves. It would be terrible to be a slave.

Nicholas heard about the man and his daughters. One night Nicholas crept up to the man's house and tossed a bag of gold coins through the window. Two more times Nicholas secretly tossed bags of coins into the man's house. Because of Nicholas' generous gifts the daughters didn't become slaves. All three daughters married good men.

Early one morning Nicholas came to church. Many bishops were there to choose a new bishop. The oldest bishop had dreamed that the first person to come that morning would be named "Nicholas" and he should be the new bishop. At first Nicholas said he was too young, but the bishops said it was what God wanted. So Nicholas became bishop in the city of Myra.

Bishops love and care for people, just like a shepherd cares for sheep. That's why bishops carry a crozier that is shaped like a shepherd's staff. When Nicholas became a bishop he carried a crozier.

Nicholas loved everyone and many stories tell how he helped people—especially those who were small or in danger. Bishop Nicholas was so loved by everyone that after he died they called him 'Saint Nicholas.'

All around the world children hang up stockings or put out shoes before St. Nicholas' Day, which is December 6th. When they get up the next morning, children run to look in their stockings or shoes, hoping to find little treats and surprises from St. Nicholas.