

Week 3: St. Philip's Fast

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

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St. Nicholas parents could not have children for many years, but when they prayed to God, God gave them a child, St. Nicholas. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth, was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while in the baptismal font, stood on his feet to pray, praising the All Holy Trinity.

St. Nicholas was chosen Archeparch thus: a bishop had a vision of Jesus telling him that the next Archeparch of Myra would be the first person to arrive in Church. The bishop went to Church at night to see who it would be. The person in church was the child Nicholas (he was the first to arrive). "What is your name, child?" the bishop asked. The boy-saint replied, "My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant."

When he grew up, St. Nicholas participated in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicene Symbol of Faith, which we pray in every Liturgy.

One time, a poor man, with three daughters had no food. In desperation the man planned to sell his daughters so they would have money for food. When the saint learned of the man's poverty and his wicked intention, he secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money, the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. St. Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, St. Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds.

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY CLASSROOM OR AT HOME?

- Read the material on this week's Feast slowly and meditatively with your family. Recall that St. Nicholas was a miracle-working saint who had a special love for children and the poor.
- Reflect on this week's reading and what it is like to be poor in our society/world and read what Jesus says about the poor (Luke 6: 20-26; Luke 12: 22-34; Matthew 25: 31-46) Ask yourself the following questions:
 - What are some new ways we can help the poor as a parish?
 - What can you do to help the poor?
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- Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from a Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.