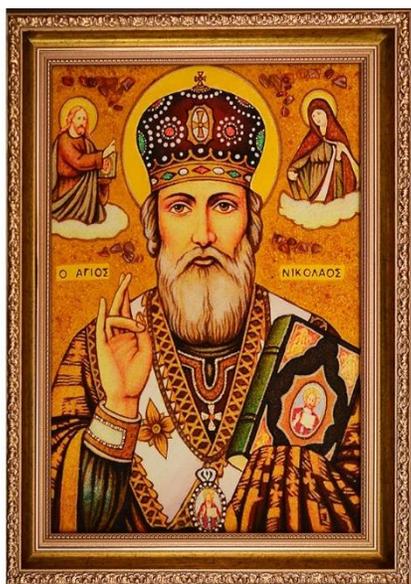


DECEMBER 6
FEAST OF ST. NICHOLAS ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA



Who is St. Nicholas?

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor. 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.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were so full of bishops, priests, and deacons, there was no room for the real criminals—murderers, thieves and robbers. After his release, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day, December 6th (December 19 on the Julian Calendar).

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.

Across the epochs St. Nicholas has continued to be venerated by Catholics and Orthodox and honored by Protestants. By his example of generosity to those in need, especially children, St. Nicholas continues to be a model for the compassionate life.

Cfr. www.stnicholascenter.org