

## Lives of Saints

# St Nicholas

280? - 342?

Feast day: 6th December



I was born in the third century in Patara, a village in what is now Turkey. My wealthy parents, who raised me to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while I was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," I used my whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. I dedicated my life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. I tried to imitate Christ by being generous and compassionate to those in need.

Many of my deeds have now become legends or given rise to worldwide traditions. For example, I once tossed three bags of gold on three different occasions through an open window, in order to provide one man with dowries for his three daughters. These bags of gold are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This incident led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from 'Saint Nicholas'. Other stories tell of me saving my people from famine and sparing the lives of those innocently accused.

I tried to do many of my deeds in secret, expecting nothing in return. But my reputation grew and within a century of my death I was celebrated as a saint. In the West I am seen as a patron of a great variety of persons, such as children, travelers, merchants, judges, paupers, sailors, victims of judicial mistakes, captives, even thieves and murderers! I am known as the friend and protector of all in trouble or need. In a way I am the source of the myth of 'Father Christmas'.

Under the Roman Emperor , who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, I suffered for my 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 my release, I attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. I died on the 6th of December, 343 AD in Myra, and was buried in my cathedral church.

"In thee, O Lord,  
have I trusted."

**St Nicholas**

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