



## ST. NICHOLAS DAY

Lisa Puccio

*"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven."* **Matthew 6:1**

### LEARN

Who was 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. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. 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. [Read more](#)

- [Find Myra and Turkey where Saint Nicholas lived on a globe or map.](#)
- Help children learn about the difference between St. Nicholas and Santa Claus. St. Nicholas was a real person who lived hundreds of years ago. Many people around the world celebrate his life and good deeds on December 6. This is a day to think more about giving than receiving!
- Adults and older teens can learn about helping the poor today. Miguel Escobar writes about [Basil of Caesarea](#).

## SHARE

Especially for Older Children and Youth

- Do you like origami? Make [St. Nicholas' bishop's mitre](#) and use them to decorate your house or add them to your St. Nicholas treat bags and Christmas gifts.
- This can be a great day for older children and youth to better understand the story of St. Nicholas. [Watch this short video about how to "become" St. Nicholas.](#)

Perform a "Nicholas deed." The video shows how to become St. Nicholas every day when you make simple acts of kindness a routine. Start on St. Nicholas Day with some special Nicholas deeds.

- Post a St. Nicholas image on social media or in a text stream to let others know you are celebrating the life of St. Nicholas. You can choose from [one of these](#) or choose another.

Nicholas gave secret gifts to those in need and people he cared about. Plan a day of sharing the story of this beloved saint!

- Make gift bags for neighbors for older folks in your congregation and plan a way to leave on their porch or doorstep when no one is looking.

Start with a St. Nicholas treat bag. You can decorate your own or find a [fancy one](#).

Fill the bag with gold wrapped [chocolate coins](#) (a reminder of Nicholas' many gifts of gold coins to the needy) a candy cane (a sweet treat shaped like the bishop's crozier) and a St. Nicholas prayer.

### St. Nicholas' Prayer:

*God of joy and cheer,*

*we thank you for your servant,  
the good bishop Nicholas.*

*In loving the poor,*

*he showed us your kindness;*

*in caring for your children,*

*he revealed your love.*

*Make us thoughtful*

*without need of reward*

*so that we, too, may be good followers of Jesus. Amen*



## GIVE

As a family make a list of what you would buy if you had \$15. In the [Gifts for Life catalog](#) you can spend \$15 to help support a caregiver in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Forgo the items on your list today and share that \$15 with those in need.

- Oranges signify the gold St. Nicholas gave away to the poor. At this time of year when oranges aren't in season, they were once considered a rare winter treat. Donate a case of oranges to your local food pantry.
- Begin or end your day with a [3-minute retreat](#) that will help you put the holiday season in perspective and leave you inspired by the life of St. Nicholas.