

Saint Nicholas

By Beth Beall

December 6 is Saint Nicholas Day. Saint Nicholas shows us how to share God's love with others. Let's hear his story, and celebrate his life with some fun activities.

For

Just for Kids

Season

Winter

Needed

The story, "Saint Nicholas," on page three (below), simple treats such as stickers or candy canes, *or* materials for drawing a picture, *or* a computer or tablet with internet connection.



Activity Plan

1. Prayer helps us to quiet down and listen for to God. You may want to begin by saying the following prayer silently or aloud. If you prefer, simply say some words that come from your heart.

God of kindness, open my heart to hear the story of your friend, Nicholas. Help me to let my light shine, as he did. Amen.

2. Read the story on page three below. You might read it on your own, or you might prefer to read it with someone else.
3. After you read the story, think about one or more of the following questions on your own or with a parent or friend:
 - I wonder why Nicholas shared his money with others instead of spending it all on himself?
 - I wonder what someone else has shared with you? I wonder what you have shared with someone else?
 - Nicholas surprised the father and three daughters by tossing coins down their chimney. I wonder if anyone has ever surprised you with an act of love?
4. Pick one or more of these activities to help you celebrate the life of Saint Nicholas.

Shoe surprises on December 6! December 6 is "Saint Nicholas Day." Remember how Nicholas left food or money in people's shoes when he saw their shoes outside? In some countries, it is a

tradition for people to leave a shoe outside their bedroom door or near the front door of the house on the evening of December 5.

Find someone in your family who wants to work on this fun project with you. Select a spot where you'd like family members to leave one shoe each. After everyone else has gone to bed, or early in the morning of December 6 before everyone has gotten up, you and your partner should pretend to be Saint Nicholas, tiptoeing around and placing little treats in each shoe! The treats can be very simple, such as a sticker or a drawing you've made, or perhaps a candy cane if you have any of those around the house.

Surprise someone else with love. Saint Nicholas often surprised people by sharing God's love with them. On or around December 6 (Saint Nicholas Day), think of someone who is in need of God's love. Maybe it's someone in your family. Perhaps it's someone in your school or at church. Imagine Jesus giving a hug to that person. Now, spend some time thinking about how you could help that person to feel Jesus' love, just like Nicholas did for other people. Here are some ideas, but any idea that comes from your heart is the best idea of all.

- Draw a picture for that person. Don't sign your name. You may want to write "To _____" and fill in the other person's name. Leave the picture in a place where you know they'll find it.
- If the person you are thinking of lives in the same house as you, you could do some of their chores as a surprise. Or you might clean up an area of the house that you don't usually clean.
- Talk with an adult in your home about an organization in your community that serves those who are particularly needy, such as the poor, the sick, the hungry or homeless. Maybe it's a homeless shelter, an animal shelter, an area hospital or perhaps a local Head Start school. The two of you can research what some of the needs of that organization are. It may be that you already have things at home that can help to meet their needs. Once you've gathered together the things you are going to give to that organization, deliver them with a big smile.
- **Check out a fun website.** The following website has a lot of activities for you to do online (or to print out). <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/for-kids/> Many of the pictures of Nicholas in these activities show him dressed in his bishop's outfit.



Saint Nicholas Tells His Story

I was born in the wintertime, and I died in the wintertime. But throughout my life, God's love filled my heart with the beautiful warmth of spring! Listen, now, as I tell you my story.

My name is Nicholas. I was born on March 15 in the year 270, on the coast of what is now Turkey. My mother and father did not have any other children, and they rejoiced at my birth. From the time I was a small child, I loved God very much. My favorite stories in the Bible were the ones about Jesus' birth, and the ones that showed Jesus' great love for children and the poor.

Sadly, my parents both died while I was still a child, and I became an orphan. My heart broke as I thought about being alone in the world without my parents. But then God reminded me that many other people also had great sadness in their lives. I began to wonder what I might do to share God's love with those who suffered. I inherited money from my parents when they died, and I began to use that money to help others. My heart was especially drawn to helping the poor, the sick, children, and sailors.

When I was still a young man, I was appointed as the Bishop of Myra. Myra was an area on the western side of Turkey, and being the Bishop meant that I was to care for the people of Myra as a shepherd cares for the sheep. I traveled throughout Myra, looking for people I could help. Once I learned of a father who had three daughters. The oldest daughter was to be married, but the father didn't have any money to give to the groom's family. (The tradition was for the bride's family to pay money to the groom's family.) So, one night, while the family was sleeping, I tossed coins into the chimney of the house where they lived. I later learned that the coins fell into the stockings of the three daughters, because the stockings had been hung to dry near the fireplace! It made me happy to know that the family now had the money they needed.

Sometimes, as I rode my horse in the evening, I would pass by people's houses and see that they had left their shoes outside. I liked to leave money or food inside their shoes, and to think about how surprised they would be in the morning! Nothing filled me with as much joy as sharing God's love through secret acts of kindness and generosity.



Not all of my life was easy. The Roman Emperor threw me and other followers of Jesus into prison for a time. Prison felt scary, but I knew that, even there, God was with me. When I was freed from prison, I continued to do my work of sharing God's goodness with others. I died on December 6 in the year 343 in Myra. People around the world, especially in Europe, started to celebrate my life on December 6. Perhaps you will remember me on December 6 this year by sharing God's love with someone in need. I hope your heart feels as happy as mine did when I surprised people with the love of God.

