

Jolly Old St. Nicholas

by Fr. Mark Pavlik
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Sunday, December 6, is the feast of St. Nicholas, although it is not celebrated this year since it falls on Sunday. I think almost everyone knows the name of this saint and his association with Santa Claus, but perhaps not much more.

St. Nicholas was born in the third century in the village of Patara in present day Turkey. He served as bishop of Myra and was well known for his generosity and care for the poor. There are many stories and legends about St. Nicholas and his great generosity. One such story tells of a poor man who had three daughters for whom he was unable to provide a dowry. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry which would leave her few options in life. When Bishop Nicholas heard of this, he went to the man's house in the dark of night and threw bags of gold through the man's windows, which provided dowries for his daughters. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from St. Nicholas.

So the tradition of St. Nick giving gifts has less to do with whether children have been naughty or nice, and more to do with Christian charity towards those who are in need. He is a reminder to each of us of our call as Christians to be good stewards of what we have and to help those who are in need.

During the month of December, the curio cabinet in the ambulatory will feature a display of religious items that pertain to St. Nicholas — make sure you stop by and take a look!