



Saint Nicholas of Myra

"The Martyr without Bloodshed"

By: Vivian Hanna, Marian Nawar, and Jeanna Nawar
St Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

St Nicholas was born in Patarain Lycia, a province of Asia Minor. From the earliest age, Nicholas would take nourishment only twice a week and that in the evening according to the Canons. He was exceedingly well brought up by his parents and followed piously in their footsteps. At the age of five he began to study the Sacred Sciences, and "day by day the teaching of the Church enlightened his mind and encouraged his thirst for sincere and true religion."

His parents died when he was a young man, leaving him very well off. Even though he was young he devoted his inheritance to works of charity. He gave most of his inheritance to children whom he dearly loved, and those who were misfortunate. Hearing of a destitute, poor citizen of Patahrad who had three daughters preparing to prostitute them for money, St Nicholas knew he could help. He discretely dropped a bag of gold through the window of their meek home under the cover of darkness. The money became the dowry for the eldest daughter and soon she was married. At intervals, Saint Nicholas did the same for the second and third daughter.

Their father would be filled with joy each night there was a bag of money on the floor, but wanted to find out the identity of the mysterious giver. Then one night the father established who their benefactor was and therefore overwhelmed St Nicholas with his gratitude. Legend has it that at times he would drop the gifts down the fireplace, when there were no open windows at the home of the destitute father, and that is how the tale of Santa Claus coming down the chimney came about.

Later on, St. Nicholas abandoned

his wealth completely and heeded a call to the ministry. He became a priest at an early age and soon was elevated to the position of a bishop. During his time as Bishop of Myra, around the fourth century, the Roman emperor ordered the merciless persecution of all Christians. St Nicholas refused to make any sacrifices to the Roman gods and therefore he was imprisoned. He was noted to be among the few Christian survivors in the city of Myra.

Through the power of prayer and God guiding him, the great and religious Constantine assumed the imperial government of the Romans and he was finally released from prison and went back to teaching others about the Lord. In doing so, many professed their faith in God and grew more spiritually. On December 6, around 343 AD, Saint Nicholas died in Myra and was buried in his own Cathedral. His followers built a public building in his honor, that was later converted into a church by early Christians, in Constantinople.

The story of the three daughters gave rise to his patronage for children especially in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, where the custom of giving gifts to the children at the Season of Nativity in Saint Nicholas name originated. The humble saint that he was, St. Nicholas would have refused all of the attention and gratitude his name receives today. As a dedicated servant of God he saw himself as Nicholas the sinner and a servant to the Lord, a title we should all be quick to claim.

May the prayers and blessings of this great Saint Nicholas be with us all and fill our hearts with humbleness and generosity towards others.



St. Nicholas
Coptic Church of St. Menas at
Fum Al'Khalis. Cairo