

Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus



A GENEROUS DISCIPLE

Who is St. Nicholas?

The Feast of St. Nicholas falls on December 6. We all know there is a strong association between St. Nicholas and a certain someone known to eat all our cookies on Christmas Eve. What we might not all know is that in the fourth century, St. Nicholas was there when the creed we pray every Sunday, the Nicene Creed, was being composed. It makes one wonder if they were serving milk and cookies in Nicaea. The text below is based on the transcript of a video made by author and Ascension video presenter Bobby Angel. Now, more about St. Nicholas.

Generous Deeds

Do you know the real St. Nick? Ho, ho, ho! There are a lot of stories and legends that flesh out who the figure of St. Nicholas was.

Nicholas was known for his generosity. His parents died at a very early age, and, convicted by the Gospel, he gave away his inheritance and his possessions to the poor. He became a bishop of the Church and was present at the Council of Nicaea, one of the significant councils of the early Church. At that time, Arius and his followers, who constituted Arianism, taught that Jesus wasn't really divine and had a different nature. This frustrated many Church leaders, including Nicholas, to the point where it came to blows, and it's said that he may have punched

Arius in the face. This has inspired many humorous internet memes of St. Nicholas punching heretics.

Legend also says he was horrified by his actions and became apologetic. We can learn from this about the zeal we can have for the truth, which sometimes gets the best of us when it comes to evangelization. It encourages us to remember that the saints themselves didn't always get it right—sometimes, they went too far, and their anger got the best of them.

"St. Nicholas was a disciple—not just giving gifts for the sake of giving but out of love for the Lord."

St. Nicholas was a disciple—not just giving gifts for the sake of giving but out of love for the Lord. He devoted his life and his possessions to preaching the gospel, and many miracles are attributed to him, some even during his lifetime. Stories tell of Nicholas calming stormy seas, and he is considered one of the patrons of sailors.

One of the most common legends about St. Nicholas is his encounter with a family that had three daughters. The father was poor and unable to afford dowries for his daughters, which risked them having to resort to prostitution to gain money. Nicholas heard of this

situation, and his heart was moved. In the middle of the night, he would drop bags of coins through the window without being seen. It wasn't until the third night, when he returned to leave money for the third daughter, that the father caught him. The father was sworn to secrecy and revealed the truth only after Nicholas died—this was the generosity of the man known as Nicholas.

Today, this story contributes to the tradition of giving gifts that appear in the middle of the night. For anyone celebrating the Feast of St. Nicholas, you might place coins or candies in children's shoes; this is where that tradition originates.

Nicholas performed many generous deeds and prayerful intercessions in secret. His actions were not about his glory but about bringing glory to Christ. Within a century of his death, his holiness was recognized, first at the local level and later honored in the broader Church. He is still recognized today in both the Eastern and Western Churches as a great and holy man. The remains of St. Nicholas are buried in a church in Bari, Italy. Decades ago, the bones were unearthed, inspected, and studied. Interestingly, there was a reconstruction of what he might have looked like based on measurements taken from his bones; it was noted that his nose appeared broken, likely from brawling or possibly from being imprisoned and tortured under Diocletian, an emperor who was not friendly to Christians.

Learn to recognize the true St. Nicholas: the man who loved Jesus Christ and was generous with his time and treasure.

Ponder and Pray

- How can St. Nicholas inspire you and your family to observe Advent well this year?
- What traditions surrounding St. Nicholas does your family have? What traditions do you want to start?

Make It Your Own

When we think about St. Nicholas, lists often come to mind. You know, lists to check once and twice. When we were children, the list was about receiving, but how about a list for giving? Make a list of ways you can live in the spirit of St. Nicholas this Advent. Ask yourself: *How can I be creatively generous? How can I defend the Faith? How can I be bold in my prayer? How can I give of my time?*

Tip of the Week

Let's pray together this prayer for the intercession of St. Nicholas:

Good St. Nicholas, help us prepare for the miracle of Jesus' coming. Help us open our eyes to the gifts of getting ready. Help us be sincere in the greetings we send and receive with love and prayer. Kind St. Nicholas, protect us from shopper fatigue, stress, and overspending. Yet, help us be kind and generous of heart to all, especially to those who are the least among us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dive Deeper

To watch Bobby Angel's video on this topic, scan the QR code



or visit: <https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/the-real-santa-what-you-didnt-know-about-saint-nicholas/>.