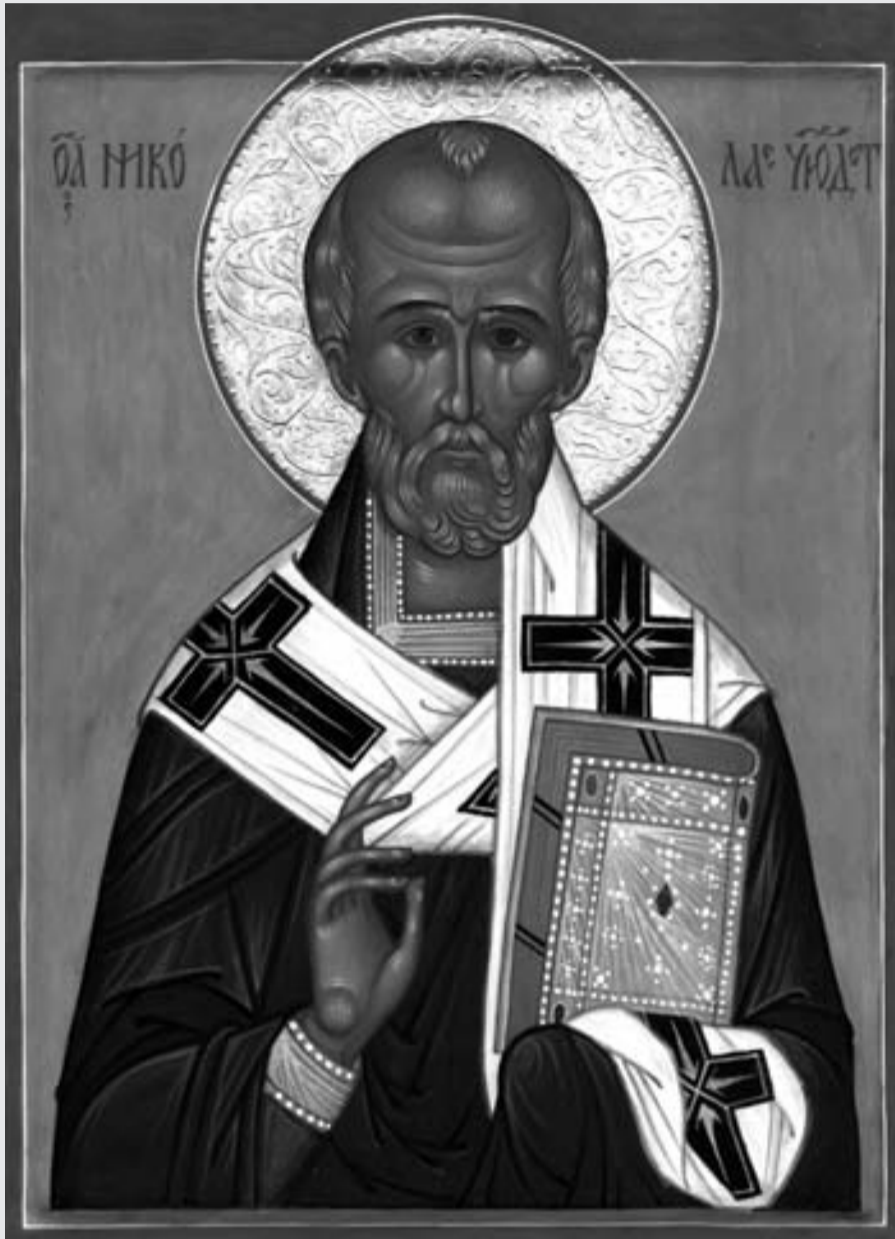


## CHILDREN'S CORNER

# STORY ABOUT ST. NICHOLAS OF MYRA A MAN NAMED NICHOLAS

*Adopted for the very young*



Today I am going to tell you about a very kind and generous man. He was born almost 300 hundred years from the time Jesus was born. This man was named Nicholas. He came from a town called Myra, far way from here. Nicholas' parents loved Jesus Our Lord and Saviour very much and taught Nicholas how to be a good Christian. When Nicholas was a boy, his uncle was the Bishop of Myra. When Nicholas grew up, he became a priest.

Nicholas loved children very much even though he did not have children of his own. One day, Nicholas heard of a poor man in his town who had three daughters. The man could no longer care for his daughters. He had no money to feed them or buy them clothes. This made Nicholas very sad and he made a plan. One evening, Nicholas filled a bag with money and secretly left it at the poor man's door.

The man was surprised when he found the bag with money at the doorstep in the morning. He wondered who left it there. The next night, Nicholas filled another bag with money and left it at the poor man's door. The father found the bag with money in the morning and wondered who placed it there. The third night, Nicholas filled up another bag with money and placed it at the man's door. But the poor man saw Nicholas and came to the door before Nicholas could leave. He thanked Nicholas

for his gift of money which was to provide plenty for food and clothes.

One day, Nicholas' uncle, the Bishop of Myra, died and Nicholas became the new Bishop. Even after he became a bishop, he still found time to look after the children and poor in his town.

Bishop Nicholas became a saint and now we know him as Saint Nicholas.

Many children call him Santa Clause. We remember Saint Nicholas because of his kindness and the generous gifts he gave to others. We remember St Nicholas in the Orthodox Church on December 6/ 19. This day comes a few weeks before Christmas. One reason we give gifts to one another at Christmas is to remember the kindness and generosity St Nicholas had for those around him.

#### TO THE PARENTS: TALK ABOUT:

1. Who was St Nicholas's uncle? (The Bishop of Myra)

2. Why did Nicholas leave money at the poor man's door? (To feed and clothe the man's children). Teach your child to collect money in a small jar and use it to help the needy.

3. When Nicholas' uncle, the bishop, died who became the new bishop? (Nicholas)

4. Show icon of St. Nicholas. Find icons of St Nicholas in your parish church or when you are visiting other Orthodox churches. Teach your child a simple prayer to St Nicholas like: O Holy Saint Nicholas, pray to God for us!

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

St Cyril of Jerusalem, a 4th century religious educator says: "Religious education is a building. If we do not dig the grounds for its foundation all work will be totally useless" This comparison is still applicable today when we are trying to raise our children in the Orthodox Faith in the multi-cultural and multi-religious environment in Canada.

Children are the future of the church. Their religious education in the Orthodox Faith from a very early age and their integration into the liturgical life of the parish will ensure our "building" of the foundation of the Orthodox Church on this continent for the next generations.

According to Fr Alexander Schmemmann, "the aim of all religious instructions in the Orthodox Church is to introduce the child/or the adult into the church, to integrate him /her into the life of the Church.- the life of grace. Communion with God, love, unity and spiritual progress toward eternal salvation, for such are the essential aims of the Church. Today, religious education aims at deifying the human being, at restoring the image of God"

Sunday is the only day in the week when the whole community gathers together in celebrating the Liturgy. It is the only day we have the opportunity to have our children learn the faith from dedicated teacher long with children of their own age. The parental involvement in the liturgical life of the parish sets an example for their children and stresses the commitment of the family Christ and His Church.

It is important that parents set the example in their practice of the faith and life of the Church. Some general guidelines are as follows:

1. Regular times for prayer in the home, e.g., in the morning, at bed-

time, before and after meals. One time each week could be set aside for family prayers, perhaps Saturday evening.

2. A place where prayers are normally said, generally before an icon.

3. Parent example in prayer. Parents should pray with their children, but also pray privately. Children will know if a parent has a life of prayer and will seek to imitate it.

4. Regular attendance at Church services. Exceptions to Sunday church services should be extremely rare and for good reasons. Long holiday services and vacations should not be reasons for missing the Divine Liturgy. Attendance at Feast day services and Saturday evening Vespers is also important.

5. Regular participation in the Sacraments. A rhythm should be established, in consultation with your parish priest, for regular receiving the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. If Communion is not received weekly, then another rhythm should be followed- monthly, major feast days or fasting seasons. The family should receive the sacraments together, whenever possible.

6. Regular reading of the Bible and/or lives of saints. This should especially be done during Great Lent, and if possible on weekly basis as a family. If parents read the Bible or spiritual literature daily, it also will not pass unnoticed by the children.

7. Last, but not the least, the love and charity expressed by parents to their children, to other parishioners, to the priest and other clergy, to older people are the real signs of what life in the Church means. An example of service, reaching out, and giving of oneself to others is the best teaching a parent can offer a child.

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