Saint Nicholas

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Saint Nicholas (Greek: Άγιος Νικόλαος, *Hagios* ["holy"] *Nicolaos* ["victory of the people"]) (270–6 December 343),[3][4] also called **Nikolaos of Myra**, was a historic 4th-century saint and Greek[5] Bishop of Myra (Demre, in Lycia, part of modern-day Turkey). Because of the many miracles attributed to his intercession, he is also known as **Nikolaos the Wonderworker** (Greek: Νικόλαος ο Θαυματουργός, *Nikolaos o Thaumaturgos*); while in the Russian Orthodox Church the name is translated "St. Nikolai The Miracle Creator". He had a reputation for secret gift-giving, such as putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him, and thus became the model for Santa Claus, whose modern name comes from the Dutch Sinterklaas. His reputation evolved among the faithful, as was common for early Christian saints.[6] In 1087, his relics were furtively translated to Bari, in southeastern Italy; for this reason, he is also known as **Nikolaos of Bari**. His feastday is 6 December.

The historical Saint Nicholas is remembered and revered among Catholic and Orthodox Christians. He is also honored by various Anglican and Lutheran churches. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors, merchants, archers, thieves, children, and students in Greece, Belgium, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Albania, Russia, the Republic of Macedonia, Slovakia, Serbia, and Montenegro. He is also the patron saint of Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Barranquilla, Bari, Beit Jala, Fribourg, Huguenots, Kozani, Liverpool, Paternopoli, Sassari, Siggiewi, and Lorraine. He was also a patron of the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine emperors, who protected his relics in Bari.

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Saint Nicholas



St. Nicholas "Lipensky" (1294 Russian icon)

Bishop of Myra, Defender of Orthodoxy, Wonderworker, Holy Hierarch

Born	c. 270 AD (the Ides of March)[1] Patara, Lycia, Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)
Died	6 December 343 AD Myra, Lycia
Honored in	Some branches of Christianity
Canonized	Pre-Congregation
Major shrine	Basilica di San Nicola, Bari, Italy
Feast	6 December (main feast day) 19 December (some Eastern churches)[2] 9 May (translation of relics)
Attributes	Vested as a Bishop. *In* Eastern Christianity, wearing an omophorion and holding a Gospel Book. Sometimes shown with Jesus Christ over one shoulder, holding a Gospel Book, and with the Theotokos over the other shoulder, holding an

- 7.5 Portugal
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	omophorion
Patronage	Children, sailors, fishermen, merchants, broadcasters, the falsely accused, prostitutes, repentant thieves, pharmacists, archers, pawnbrokers



St Nicholas

Translation of the relics

On 26 August 1071 Romanus IV, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (reigned 1068–1071), faced Sultan Alp Arslan of the Seljuk Turks (reigned 1059–1072) in the Battle of Manzikert. The battle ended in humiliating defeat and capture for Romanus. As a result the Empire temporarily lost control over most of Asia Minor to the invading Seljuk Turks. The Byzantines would regain its control over Asia Minor during the reign of Alexius I Comnenus (reigned 1081–1118). But early in his reign Myra was overtaken by the Islamic invaders. Taking advantage of the confusion, sailors from Bari in Apulia seized the remains of the saint from his burial church in Myra, over the objections of the Orthodox monks. Returning to Bari, they brought the remains with them and cared for them. The remains arrived on 9 May 1087. There are numerous variations of this account. In some versions those taking the relics are characterized as thieves or pirates, in others they are said to have taken them in response to a vision wherein Saint Nicholas himself appeared and commanded that his relics be moved in order to preserve them from the impending Muslim conquest.

Vials of myrrh from his relics have been taken all over the world for centuries, and can still be obtained from his church in Bari. Currently at Bari, there are two churches at his shrine, one Roman Catholic and one Orthodox.

According to a local legend, some of his remains were brought by three pilgrims to a church in what is now Nikolausberg in the vicinity of the city of Göttingen, Germany, giving the church and village its name.

There is also a Venetian legend (preserved in the *Morosini Chronicle*) that most of the relics were actually taken to Venice (where a great church to St. Nicholas, the patron of sailors, was built on the Lido), only an arm being left at Bari. This tradition was overturned in the 1950s when a scientific investigation of the relics in Bari revealed a largely intact skeleton.

It is said that in Myra the relics of Saint Nicholas each year exuded a clear watery liquid which smells like rose water, called manna (or myrrh), which is believed by the faithful to possess miraculous powers. After the relics were brought to Bari, they continued to do so, much to the joy of the new owners. Even up to the present day, a flask of manna is extracted from the tomb of Saint Nicholas every year on 6 December (the

Saint's feast day) by the clergy of the basilica. The myrrh is collected from a sarcophagus which is located in the basilica vault and could obtained in the shop nearby.

On 28 December 2009, the Turkish Government announced that it would be formally requesting the return of St Nicholas's bones to Turkey from the Italian government.[7][8] Turkish authorities have cited the fact that St Nicolas himself wanted to be buried at his episcopal town. They also state that his remains were illegally removed from Turkey.



The dowry for the three virgins (Gentile da Fabriano, c. 1425, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome).

Legends and folklore

Another legend[9] tells how a terrible famine struck the island and a malicious butcher lured three little children into his house, where he slaughtered and butchered them, placing their remains in a barrel to cure, planning to sell them off as ham. Saint Nicholas, visiting the region to care for the hungry, not only saw through the butcher's horrific crime but also resurrected the three boys from the barrel by his prayers. Another version of this story, possibly formed around the eleventh century, claims that the butcher's victims were instead three clerks who wished to stay the night. The man murdered them, and was advised by his wife to dispose of them by turning them into meat pies. The Saint saw through this and brought the men back to life.

However, in his most famous exploit,[10] a poor man had three daughters but could not afford a proper dowry for them. This meant that they would remain unmarried and probably, in absence of any other possible employment would have to become prostitutes. Hearing of the poor man's plight, Nicholas decided to help him but being too modest to help the man in public (or to save the man the humiliation of accepting charity), he went to his house under the cover of night and threw three purses (one for each daughter) filled with gold coins through the window opening into the man's house.

One version has him throwing one purse for three consecutive nights. Another has him throw the purses over a period of three years, each time the night before one of the daughters comes "of age". Invariably, the third time the father lies in wait, trying to discover the identity of their benefactor. In one version the father confronts the saint, only to have Saint Nicholas say it is not him he should thank, but God alone. In another version, Nicholas learns of the poor man's plan and drops the third bag down the chimney instead; a variant holds that the daughter had washed her stockings that evening and hung them over the embers to dry, and that the bag of gold fell into the stocking.

The miracle of wheat multiplication

During a great famine that the Bishop of Myra experienced, a ship was is in the port at anchor, which was loaded with wheat for the Emperor in Byzantium. He invited the sailors to unload a part of the wheat to help in time of need. The sailors at first disliked the request, because the wheat had to be weighed accurately and delivered to the Emperor. Only when Nicholas promised them that they would not take any damage for their consideration, the sailors agreed. When they arrived later in the capital, they made a surprising find. The weight of the load had not changed. The removed wheat in Myra was even enough for two full years and could even be used for sowing.[11]



A key ring with the image of Nikolaos of

The face of the historical saint

Myra as patron of the sailors

Where as the devotional importance of relics and the economics associated with pilgrimages caused the remains of most saints to be divided up and spread over numerous churches in several countries, St. Nicholas is unique in that most of his bones have been preserved in one spot: his grave crypt in Bari. Even with the still-continuing miracle of the manna, the archdiocese of Bari has allowed for one scientific survey of the bones. In the late 1950s, during a restoration of the chapel, it allowed a team of hand-picked scientists to photograph and measure the contents of the crypt grave.

In the summer of 2005, the report of these measurements was sent to a forensic laboratory in England. The review of the data revealed that the historical St. Nicholas was barely five feet in height and had a broken nose.



Saint Nicholas, Russian icon from first quarter of 18th cent. (Kizhi monastery, Karelia).

Formal veneration of the saint

Among the Greeks and Italians he is a favorite of sailors, fishermen, ships and sailing. As such he has become over time the patron saint of several cities maintaining harbors. In centuries of Greek folklore, Nicholas was seen as "The Lord of the Sea", often described by modern Greek scholars as a kind of Christianized version of Poseidon. In modern Greece, he is still easily among the most recognizable saints and 6 December finds many cities celebrating their patron saint. He is also the patron saint of all of Greece.



Basilica di San Nicola in Bari, Italy where the relics of St. Nicholas are kept today.

In Russia, Saint Nicholas' memory is celebrated on every Thursday of the year (together with the Apostles), and special hymns to him are found in the liturgical text known as the Octoechos. Soon after the transfer of Saint Nicholas' relics from Myra to Bari, a Russian version of his Life and an account of the transfer of his relics were written by a contemporary to this event.[12] Devotional akathists and canons have been composed in his honour, and are frequently chanted by the faithful as they ask for his intercession. He is mentioned in the Liturgy of Preparation during the Divine Liturgy (Eastern Orthodox Eucharist) and during the All-Night Vigil. Many Orthodox churches will have his icon, even if they are not named after him.



Saint Nicholas Saves Three Innocents from Death (oil painting by Ilya Repin, 1888, State Russian Museum).

In late medieval England, on Saint Nicholas' Day parishes held Yuletide "boy bishop" celebrations. As part of this celebration, youths performed the functions of priests and bishops, and exercised rule over their elders. Today, Saint Nicholas is still celebrated as a great gift-giver in several Western European countries. According to one source, medieval nuns used the night of 6 December to anonymously deposit baskets of food and clothes at the doorsteps of the needy. According to another source, on 6 December every sailor or ex-sailor of the Low Countries (which at that time was virtually all of the male population) would descend to the harbour towns to participate in a church celebration for their patron saint. On the way back they would

stop at one of the various *Nicholas fairs* to buy some hard-to-come-by goods, gifts for their loved ones and invariably some little presents for their children. While the real gifts would only be presented at Christmas, the little presents for the children were given right away, courtesy of Saint Nicholas. This and his miracle of him resurrecting the three butchered children, made Saint Nicholas a patron saint of children and later students as well.

Among Albanians, Saint Nicholas is known as Shen'Kollë and is venerated by most Catholic families, even those from villages that are devoted to other saints. The Feast of Saint Nicholas is celebrated on the eve of 5 December, known as Shen'Kolli i Dimnit (Saint Nicholas of Winter), as well as on the commemoration of the interring of his bones in Bari, the eve of 8 May, known as Shen'Kolli i Majit (Saint Nicholas of May). Albanian Catholics often swear by Saint Nicholas, saying "Pasha Shejnti Shen'Kollin!" ("May I see Holy Saint Nicholas!"), indicating the importance of this saint in Albanian culture, especially among the Albanians of Malësia. On the eve of his feast day, Albanians will light a candle and abstain from meat, preparing a feast of roasted lamb and pork, to be served to guests after midnight. Guests will greet each other, saying, "Nata e Shen'Kollit ju nihmoftë!" ("May the Night of Saint Nicholas help you!") and other such blessings. The bones of Albania's greatest hero, George Kastrioti, were also interred in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Lezha, Albania, upon his death.



St. Nicholas, the patron saint of Russian merchants. Fresco by Dionisius from the Ferapontov Monastery.

In Iconography

Saint Nicholas is a popular subject portrayed on countless Eastern Orthodox icons, particularly Russian ones. He is depicted as an Orthodox bishop, wearing the omophorion and holding a Gospel Book, sometimes he is depicted wearing the Eastern Orthodox mitre, sometimes he is bareheaded. Iconographically, Nicholas is depicted as an elderly man with a short, full white beard and balding head. In commemoration of the miracle attributed to him by tradition at the Ecumenical Council of Nicea, he is sometimes depicted with Christ over his left shoulder holding out a Gospel Book to him and the Theotokos over his right shoulder holding the omophorion. Because of his patronage of mariners, occasionally Saint Nicholas will be shown standing in a boat or rescuing a drowning sailor (http://www.skete.com /index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&Product_ID=896&Category_ID=49) .

In Roman Catholic iconography, Saint Nicholas is depicted as a bishop, wearing the insignia of this dignity: a red bishop's cloak, a red miter and a bishop's crozier. The episode with the three dowries is commemorated by showing him holding in his hand either three purses, three coins or three balls of gold. Depending on whether he is depicted as patron saint of children or sailors, his images will be completed by a background showing ships, children or three figures climbing out of a wooden barrel (the three slaughtered children he resurrected).

In a strange twist, the three gold balls referring to the dowry affair are sometimes metaphorically interpreted as being oranges or other fruits. As in the Low Countries in medieval times oranges most frequently came from Spain, this led to the belief that the Saint lives in Spain and comes to visit every winter bringing them oranges, other 'wintry' fruits and tales of magical creatures.

Saint Nicholas Day

Further information: Christmas gift-bringer

The tradition of *Saint Nicholas Day*, usually on 6 December, is a festival for children in many countries in Europe related to surviving legends of the saint, and particularly his reputation as a bringer of gifts. The

American Santa Claus, as well as the Anglo-Canadian and British Father Christmas, derive from these legends. "Santa Claus" is itself derived from the Dutch *Sinterklaas*.



Polychrome relief of *Sinter Claes* in Dam (Amsterdam).

Malta

In Malta, St. Nicholas is the patron Saint of the Village of Siggiewi. The ruins of the former parish church, dedicated to St Nicholas of Bari are still visible today. Lately, great restoration works have been carried out and retrieved its old glory. The baroque parish church, dedicated to the same saint, was erected by the villagers who raised the necessary funds between the years 1676 to 1693. It was designed by the Maltese architect, Lorenzo Gafà but underwent some changes throughout the years. The portico and naves were added by Professor Nicola Żammit in the latter half of the 19th century. He is kind to all people.

Ireland

The saint who inspired the legend of Santa Claus is believed to have been buried in Newtown Jerpoint in Kilkenny some 800 years ago. Originally buried in Myra in modern day Turkey, his body was moved from there to Italy in 1169, but said to have been taken afterwards to Ireland by Nicholas de Frainet, a distant relative. The church of Saint Nicholas, was built by his family there and dedicated to the memory of the saint. A slab grave on the ground of this church claims to hold his remains. There is a yearly Mass in relation to the memory of Saint Nicholas, but otherwise the celebration is quite low key..

Italy

St. Nicholas (*San Nicola*) is the patron of the city of Bari, where it is believed he is buried. Its deeply felt celebration is called the *Festa di San Nicola*, held on the 7–9 of May. In particular on 8 May the relics of the saint are carried on a boat on the sea in front of the city with many boats following (*Festa a mare*). On 6 December there is a ritual called the *Rito delle nubili*. The same tradition is currently observed in Sassari, where during the day of Saint Nicholas, patron of the city, gifts are given to young brides who need help before getting married.

In the provinces of Trieste, Belluno and Trentino St. Nicholas (*San Nicolò*) is celebrated with gifts given to children on the morning of 6 December and with a fair called *Fiera di San Nicolò*[13] during the first weeks of December. Depending on the cultural background, in some families this celebration is more important than Christmas. Trieste is a city on the sea, being one of the main ports of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and is influenced mainly by Italian, Slovenian and German cultures, but also Greek and Serbian.

Spain

St. Nicholas ("San Nicolás") is the patron of the Valladolid, one of the two medieval universities of Spain.

Portugal

In one city (Guimarães) in Portugal, St. Nicholas (*São Nicolau*) has been celebrated since the Middle Ages as the patron saint of high-school students, in the so called *Nicolinas*, a group of festivities that occur from 29 November to 7 December each year. In the rest of Portugal this is not celebrated.

The Netherlands, Belgium, and Lower Rhineland (Germany)


Sinterklaas in the Netherlands in 2007

Main article: Sinterklaas

In the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas' Eve (5 December) is the primary occasion for gift-giving, when his reputed birthday is celebrated.

In the days leading up to 5 December (starting when Saint Nicholas has arrived in the Netherlands by steamboat in late November), young children put their shoes in front of the chimneys and sing *Sinterklaas* songs. Often they put a carrot or some hay in the shoes, as a gift to St. Nicholas' horse. (In recent years the horse has been named *Amerigo* in The Netherlands and *Slechtweervandaag* in Flanders.) The next morning they will find a small present in their shoes, ranging from sweets to marbles or some other small toy. On the evening of 5 December, *Sinterklaas* brings presents to every child who has behaved him- or herself in the past year (in practice, just like with Santa Claus, all children receive gifts without distinction). This is often done by placing a bag filled with presents outside the house or living room, after which a neighbour or parent bangs the door or window, pretending to be *Sinterklaas'* assistant. Another option is to hire or ask someone to dress up as *Sinterklaas* and deliver the presents personally. *Sinterklaas* wears a bishop's robes including a red cape and mitre and is assisted by many mischievous helpers with black faces and colourful Moorish dress, dating back two centuries. These helpers are called 'Zwarte Pieten' ("Black Petes") or "Père Fouettard" in the French-speaking part of Belgium.

The myth is, if a child had been naughty, the Zwarte Pieten put all the naughty children in sacks, and Sinterklaas took them to Spain (it is believed that Sinterklaas comes from Spain, where he returns after 5 December). Therefore, many Sinterklaas songs still allude to a watching Zwarte Piet and a judging Sinterklaas.

In the past number of years, there has been a recurrent discussion about the politically incorrect nature of the Moorish helper. In particular Dutch citizens with backgrounds from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles might feel offended by the Dutch slavery history connected to this emblem and regard the Zwarte Pieten to be racist. Others state that the black skin color of Zwarte Piet originates in his profession as a chimneysweep, hence the delivery of packages though the chimney. [14]

In recent years, Christmas (along with Santa Claus) has been pushed by shopkeepers as another gift-giving festival, with some success; although, especially for young children, Saint Nicholas' Eve is still much more important than Christmas. The rise of Father Christmas (known in Dutch as *de Kerstman*) is often cited as an example of globalisation and Americanisation.[15]

On the Frisian islands (*Waddeneilanden*), the Sinterklaas feast has developed independently into traditions very different from the one on the mainland.[16]

Germany

In Germany, *Nikolaus* is usually celebrated on a small scale. Many children put a boot called *Nikolaus-Stiefel (Nikolaus boot)* outside the front door on the night of 5 December. St. Nicholas fills the boot with gifts and sweets overnight, and at the same time checks up on the children to see if they were good, polite and helpful the last year. If they were not, they will have a tree branch (*Rute*) in their boots instead. Sometimes a disguised Nikolaus also visits the children at school or in their homes and asks them if they have been good (sometimes ostensibly checking his golden book for their record), handing out presents on a per-behavior basis. This has become more lenient in recent decades.

But for some children, Nikolaus also elicited fear, as he was often accompanied by *Knecht Ruprecht*

(Servant Ruprecht), who would threaten to beat the children for misbehavior as using this myth to 'bring up cheek children' for a better, good behavior. Any kind of punishment isn't really following and just an antic legend. Knecht Ruprecht was equipped with eight deer legs. In Switzerland, where he is called *Schmutzli*, he threatens to put badly behaved children in a sack and bring them away to the dark forest. In other accounts he throws the sack into the river, drowning the naughty children.

Central Europe

In highly Catholic regions, the local priest was informed by the parents about their children's behaviour and would then personally visit the homes in the traditional Christian garment and threaten to beat them with a rod. In parts of Austria, *Krampusse*, who local tradition says are Nikolaus's helpers (in reality, typically children of poor families), roamed the streets during the festival. They wore masks and dragged chains behind them. These *Krampusläufe* (Krampus runs) still exist.

In Croatia, Nikolaus (*Sveti Nikola*) who visits on Saint Nicholas day (*Nikolinje*) brings gifts to children commending them for their good behaviour over the past year and exhorting them to continue in the same manner in the year to come. If they fail to do so they will receive a visit from *Krampus* who traditionally leaves a rod, an instrument their parents will use to discipline them.

In Czech and Slovakia, *Mikuláš*, in Poland *Mikołaj* and in Ukraine *Svyatyi Mykolay* is often also accompanied by an angel (*anděl*/*anioł* /*anhel*) who acts as a counterweight to the ominous *devil* or *Knecht Ruprecht* (*čert*/*czart*). Additionally, in Poland children find the candy and small gifts under the pillow or in their shoes the evening of 5 December or the morning of December 6. In Ukraine this tradition is celebrated on 19 December.



Mikulás in Ečka (Vojvodina - Serbia) brings joy to children in 2010.

In Hungary and Romania, children typically leave their boots on the windowsill on the evening of 5 December. By next morning Nikolaus (*Szent Miklós* traditionally but more commonly known as *Mikulás* in Hungary or Moş Nicolae (*Sfântul Nicolae*) in Romania) leaves candy and gifts if they have been good, or a rod (Hungarian: *virgács*, Romanian: *nuieluşă*) if they have been bad (most kids end up getting small gifts but also a small rod). In Hungary he is often accompanied by the *Krampusz,* the frightening helper who is out to take away the bad ones.

In Luxembourg, *Kleeschen* is accompanied by the *Houseker* a frightening helper wearing a brown monk's habit.

In Slovenia, Saint Nikolaus (*Miklavž*) is accompanied by an angel and a devil (*parkelj*) corresponding to the Austrian Krampus.

Greece, Serbia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria

In Greece, Saint Nicholas does not carry an especial association with gift-giving, as this tradition is carried over to St. Basil of Cesarea, celebrated on New Year's Day. St. Nicholas being the protector of sailors, he is considered the patron saint of the Greek navy, war and merchant alike and his day is marked by festivities aboard all ships and boats, at sea and in port. It is also associated with the preceding feasts of St. Barbara (4 December), St. Savvas (5 December), and the following feast of St. Anne (9 December); all these are often collectively called the "*Nikolobárbara*", and are considered a succession of days that heralds the onset of truly wintry cold weather in the country. Therefore by tradition, homes should have already been laid with carpets, removed for the warm season, by St. Andrew's Day (30 November), a week ahead of the

Nikolobárbara.



A modern metal icon of St. Nicholas by the Bulgarian artist Georgi 'Chapa' Chapkanov. Gilbert House, Stanley, Falkland Islands.

In Serbia and Yugoslavia, Saint Nicholas is celebrated as patron saint of many families, and is as such celebrated in the tradition of Slava. Since the feast of Saint Nicholas always falls in the fasting period preceding the Christmas, feast is celebrated according to the Eastern Orthodox Church fasting rules. Fasting refers in this context to the eating of a restricted diet for reasons of Religion.

In the Republic of Bulgaria, Saint Nicholas is one of the most celebrated saints. Many churches and monasteries are named after him. As a holiday Saint Nicholas is celebrated on the 6th of December.

Lebanon

Saint Nicholas is celebrated by all the Christian communities in Lebanon: Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian. Many places, churches, convents, and schools are named in honor of Saint Nicholas, such as *Escalier Saint-Nicolas des Arts*, Saint Nicolas Garden, and Saint Nicolas Greek Orthodox Cathedral.



2006 Christmas stamp, Ukraine, showing St. Nicholas and children.

Palestine

Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of the town of Beit Jala. This little town, which is located only two kilometers to the west of Bethlehem, boasts of being the place where St. Nicholas spent four years of his life during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Every year on the 19th of December according to the Gregorian Calendar—that is the 6th of December according to the Julian Calendar—a solemn Divine Liturgy is held in the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, and is usually followed by parades, exhibitions, and many activities. Palestinian Christians of all sects, denominations and churches come to Beit Jala and participate in prayers and celebrations.

United States and Canada

While feasts of Saint Nicholas are not observed nationally, cities with strong German influences like Milwaukee, Cincinnati and St. Louis celebrate St. Nick's Day on a scale similar to the German custom.[17] As in other countries, many people in the United states celebrate a separate St Nicholas Day by putting their shoes outside their bedroom doors on the evening of 5 December. St Nicholas then comes during the night. On the morning of 6 December, those people will find their shoes filled with gifts and sugary treats. Widespread adoption of the tradition has spread among the German, Polish, Belgian and Dutch communities throughout the United States.

On the day after Thanksgiving or sometime in December, children and their families put up a Christmas tree. A Christmas tree is a medium-sized pine, fir, or spruce tree that they put in their family room and decorate with ornaments and garlands of all sorts. They also normally put a star or angel on the top, as a symbol of Christ's birth. On 24 December, Christmas Eve, each child puts one empty stocking/sock on their fireplace. The following morning of 25 December, the children awake to find that St. Nick has filled their stockings with candy and small presents (if the children have been good) or coal (if not). Gifts often include chocolate gold coins to represent the gold St. Nick gave to the poor and small trinkets. They also awake to find presents under the tree, wrapped in Christmas-themed paper.

In music

- *San Nicola di Bari*, an oratorio composed by Giovanni Battista Bononcini (1693).
- *St. Nicolas*, a choral song for male choir by Edward Purcell (1730).
- *"St. Nicolas"*, a Christmas cantata by Benjamin Britten (1948).

Operetta *St. Nicholas arrives*

Salesian priest dr. Jerko Gržinčič wrote a Christmas operetta entitled "Miklavž prihaja" [18] in three acts. Premiere took place before World War II in hostel Union in Ljubljana (Slovenia) with great success.[19]

Metamorphosis in Demre

The metamorphosis of Saint Nicholas into the more commercially lucrative Santa Claus, which took several centuries in Europe and America, has recently been re-enacted in the saint's home town: the city of Demre. This modern Turkish town is built near the ruins of ancient Myra. As St. Nicholas is a very popular Orthodox saint, the city attracts many Russian tourists. A solemn bronze statue of the Saint by the Russian sculptor Gregory Pototsky, donated by the Russian government in 2000, was given a prominent place on the square in front of the medieval church of St. Nicholas. In 2005, mayor Suleyman Topcu had the statue replaced by a red-suited plastic Santa Claus statue, because he wanted the central statue to be more recognizable to visitors from all over the world. Protests from the Russian government against this action were successful only to the extent that the Russian statue was returned, without its original high pedestal, to a corner near the church.



Russian Orthodox statue of Saint Nicolas, now in a corner near the church in Demre.



Noel Baba at the square in front of the church in Demre.

Restoration on Saint Nicholas' original church in Demre is currently under way. In 2007, the Turkish Ministry of Culture gave permission for the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated at the site, and has contributed the sum of forty-thousand Turkish Lira to the project.

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13. ^ http://www.whatsonwhen.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event_id=45375 **(Dutch)**
14. ^ http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,594674,00.html **(Dutch)**
15. ^ Dekker, Roodenburg & Rooijakkers (redd.): *Volkscultuur. Een inleiding in de Nederlandse etnologie*, Uitgeverij SUN, Nijmegen, 2000: pp. 213–4 **(Dutch)**
16. ^ http://www.stichtingtoverbal.nl/nl/artikelen/folklore/sundrums/ **(Dutch)**
17. ^ Meg Kissinger, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 1999, "St. Nick's Day can be a nice little surprise" (http://www2.jsonline.com/news/metro/dec99/stnick05120499a.asp)
18. ^ English: "St. Nicholas arrives"
19. ^ This operetta is translated in Croatian too: "Sveti Nikola dolazi" and partly in Hungarian: "Jön a Mikulás".

Further reading

- Jones, Charles W. "Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan: Biography of a Legend" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1978.
- ASANO, Kazuo ed., *The Island of St. Nicholas. Excavation and Research of Gemiler Island Area, Lycia, Turkey* (Osaka University Press) 2010.

External links

- Saint Nicholas (http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christianity/People/Saints/N/Saint_Nicholas_of_Myra/) at the Open Directory Project
- Translation of Grimm's Saga No. 134 about St. Nicholas (http://www.fairytalechannel.org/2009_12_07_archive.html)
- Comprehensive St. Nicholas-related information and resources. (http://www.stnicholascenter.org)
- 130 pictures of the church in Myra (http://www.pbase.com/dosseman/stnicolas)
- "Nicholas of Myra" (http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8167) . *Bishop of Myra*. Find a Grave. Jan 01, 2001. http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8167. Retrieved Aug 18, 2011. (original tomb at Church of Saint Nicholas, Myra, Turkey)

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