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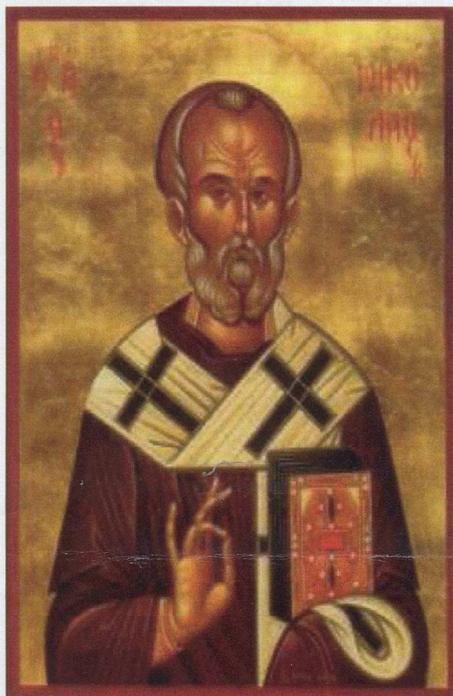
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Saint Nicholas, Man and Myth

The story of Nicholas is told in many books in as many different ways – typical of a myth that has been over 1600 years in the making. All sources seem to agree that Nicholas died on 6 December, though the exact year of his death, in early or mid 4th century, is less clear.



His parents left the young man well off. Nicholas was a devout Christian and attended the local church every day. Following the death of the Bishop of Myra (modern Antalya) a committee was guided to appoint as the next bishop the first person to enter this church on the following day. The first person to arrive was Nicholas, and so he became the new bishop.

Many of the legends that surround Bishop Nicholas centre

around his miraculous deeds and charitable acts, the latter with the common element that Nicholas gave away his riches in secret.

The story that was to associate Nicholas with Christmas concerned an impoverished nobleman in Myra who could not afford the dowries needed for the marriages of his three daughters. Nicholas, on hearing of the family's problem, is said to have provided a bag of gold to pay for the eldest daughter's wedding. As was his practice, he did it secretly, by tossing the bag through an open window at night.

The procedure was successfully repeated for the middle daughter, but a problem arose as the youngest daughter required her dowry in the winter when the window was firmly shut at night. Nicholas solved this problem by quietly climbing on to the roof of the house and dropping the bag of gold down the chimney. Some say it landed in a stocking that was hung up to dry by the fire, others say that it landed in a shoe.

• Nicholas was buried in Myra and within 200 years of his death he was revered widely. When he was made a Catholic saint, his feast day was celebrated on 6th December.

He is one of the most loved of the minor saints and he quickly became patron saint of children and sailors.

After Myra and the area around it had fallen to the Muslims, the remains of Nicholas were removed from Myra and taken for safe keeping to Bari in Italy, where his supposed relics still lie.

Merry Christmas



to all the members
of the Swiss Society of NZ Inc
from the Helvetia team

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