

St. Nicholas Feast Day December 19th

The Life of St. Nicholas, The Wonder Worker

It is very humbling for a parish to bear the name of one of the most beloved saints of the Greek Orthodox Church. While nothing is known of the early life of St. Nicholas, it is known that he was born at the turn of the fourth century in Patara, near Myra, in the Roman province of Lycia, Asia Minor. It was in Myra that he gained fame for his benevolence and saintliness as an archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church. He was ordained to the priesthood at an early age, was shortly thereafter elevated to the bishopric, and soon commanded the respect and love of all the citizens of Myra. It is said that Nicholas was of a quiet, ascetic and studious nature, and was one of the 318 Church Fathers who participated in the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325 A.D. It was at that council that Nicholas sternly chastised the arch heretic Arius in the presence of Emperor Constantine and all those in attendance. Nicholas proved to be a true champion of the Orthodox faith both in word and deed. Prior to his elevation as archbishop, Nicholas suffered imprisonment, harsh treatment, and torture at the hands of pagans who tried in vain to make him deny Christ. He bore terrible scars of torture on his body for many years after his release from prison. He defended the unfortunate, assisted the poor, and anonymously performed acts of kindness. He often made gifts of bags of gold to the young and needy, and won fame for his love of children and underprivileged families. St. Nicholas passed on to eternity at a venerable age, of natural causes, perhaps in 330 A.D. The fame of St. Nicholas and the love people had for him led to his being held as the patron saint of children, merchants, sailors, scholars, travelers, and especially as a fervent intercessor to the Lord for miraculous healings. The representation of Santa Claus as the potbellied “jolly old elf” is a fanciful image of merriment and consumerism that is a caricature of the historical St. Nicholas. The idea that St. Nicholas came from Bari, Italy stems from the fact that late in the 11th century his remains were secretly taken from Myra and deposited in a basilica dedicated to St. Nicholas in that Italian city.