**St. Nicholas day is celebrated on December 6.**

St. Nicholas was a bishop of an ancient Greek town called Myra, in present-day Turkey. He is listed as an attendee of the first Council of Nicaea on some records from then. He was born in 270 and died on December 6, 343.

St. Nicholas always had a love for the poor and would work for their benefit. The story goes that there was a poor man in town with no money for a dowry for his three daughters. No dowry meant no marriage, which would have left his daughters to be sold into a life of servitude. Late one night, St. Nicholas secretly threw a bag of money through a window of the family home. He repeated this for 2 more times thus allowing each of the daughters a dowry. This started the idea of secret giving, a tradition that we continue with to this present day.

There are many stories about miracles performed though the intersession of St. Nicholas including saving sailors from drowning, towns from starving and children from being hurt or killed. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of children, bakers, brides, unmarried women, grooms, sailors and travelers as well as many others.

Traditions that are practiced around the world for St. Nicholas Day include parades, and special meals as well as acts of charity and gift giving. On December 5, the eve of St. Nicholas Day, many children in our country as well as Europe traditionally leave a shoe or a boot in front of an outside the door. The next morning the shoe is filled with small gifts, like coins, candy and oranges. The coins are given in remembrance of the coins St. Nicholas left the girls in need of a dowry and oranges are given to signify the gold that St. Nicholas gave away to those in need.

In some countries, like Germany and Austria, St. Nicholas is accompanied by his counterpart the Krampus. Much like the legend of Santa Claus, the Krampus will leave coal in the shoes of misbehaving children. Children are encouraged to participate in acts of kindness to stay off of the Krampus’ naughty list.

One fun way to celebrate is to make traditional St. Nicholas cookies. In the United States gingerbread and sugar cookies are the most popular while in countries such as the Netherlands and Germany make spice cookies and peppermint cookies. The spice cookies are made into the shape of St. Nicholas - complete with a Bishop’s mitre and staff!

Another tradition that is observed is to perform random acts of kindness on St. Nicholas’ feast day. You could drop off a grocery store gift card to those in need, give books to your parish to use at Christmas, anonymously pay the utility bill of someone in need or donate gifts to local foster care programs. Spend time as a family brainstorming what you can do to serve your community just as St. Nicholas did when he was alive.

Happy St. Nicholas Day!