



Family Resource

The Joy of Giving

The Joy-of-Giving

It's common to look forward to the gifts we'll receive at Christmas. But as we learn about the life of St. Nicholas – from which we derive our “Santa Claus” – we will quickly find that it is more blessed indeed to give than to receive.

As Christmas approaches, most of us spend time making lists of presents that we hope to receive. Advent is an appropriate time to learn about the life of St. Nicholas and to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Nicholas was born during the third century in a village that is located in modern-day Turkey. His wealthy parents raised him to be a devout Christian. Sadly, they died in an epidemic while he was still young. Nicholas obeyed Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor." He used his whole inheritance to help the needy, the sick, and the suffering. The church recognized his total dedication to God and declared him Bishop of Myra while he was still a young man. Nicholas was known across the region for his generosity to people in need, for his love of children, and for his concern for sailors. You can find many legends about his life on the Internet and in library books. This special day celebrates the stories of his generosity and goodness. The life of St. Nicholas has much to teach us.

A saint of the Catholic Church, his Feast Day is December 6.

This Advent Season, challenge your family to approach Christmas by focusing on St. Nicholas as the model of giving. Rather than focusing on what you and the rest of your family may receive, think about what your family can give. In addition to money, you can offer the gifts of time, talent or treasure for others here at home – and for your mission family far away.

Ask family members to think of meaningful, non-material gifts they have received (*a compliment, a word of encouragement, a helping hand, etc.*) and to share the story of those gifts. Brainstorm ways in which each member of your family can give rather than receive – and to do so for the Missions. Ask each person to choose at least one way to give time, talent and treasure for each week of Advent. Here are a few suggestions:

- Commit to praying daily for children, especially for troubled young people .
- Collect non-perishable food from neighbors and family. Take those items to a local food pantry.
- Write a letter to your members of Congress or governor, telling what you think should be done to help poor families.
- Place your Holy Bucket on your dinner table. At every meal, after you give thanks for the food, place a donation in the bucket .
- Call someone you know who is experiencing sorrow to offer comfort.

Invite everyone to write down their good actions on small pieces of paper, notecards or self-stick notes and place them in a special place. Conclude your time together with the following *Prayer for A Giving Heart*.

*Good and gracious God,
You have always been so generous to us.
Teach us what it means to give without expecting anything in return.
Make each one of us grateful for all we have.
Create in us, Lord, a heart that gladly gives.
May the hope of Jesus be seen in our hearts, our words, and our actions,
throughout this Advent Season.
Help us remember the greatest gift shown to us – the Christ Child.
Inspire us to respond to the needs of those around us.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*