

# Saint Nicholas Speaks

*(Santa Clause Is Coming To Town is played/projected on the front wall.)*

*You better watch out! You better not cry!  
You better not pout, I'm telling you why:  
Santa Claus is coming to town.  
He knows when you are sleeping,  
He knows when you're awake,  
He knows when you've been bad or good,  
So be good for goodness sake!  
He's making a list, checking it twice,  
Gonna find out who's naughty or nice,  
Santa Claus is coming to town.*

**(SLIDE)** Ho! Ho! Ho! I just love Christmas time, don't you? I just wish you all wouldn't mix me up with that other guy... You know who I'm talking about, right? I mean all this is wonderful... And I'm flattered, but it's really not me. I'm not omniscient. I don't know if you're bad or good. I have no way of knowing if you're sleeping. And I'm not omnipresent. I can't be everywhere at once on the same night. Only God can be these things. I also don't live at the North Pole nor do I drive a sleigh with eight tiny reindeer? No, all of that's that other guy... You know the one who lives at the North Pole and has lots of elves making toys all year. That's Santa Claus. I definitely do not live at the North Pole nor do I drive a sleigh with eight tiny reindeer.

Who am I then? I saw a cartoon the other day. A man reading the newspaper was saying to his wife, "Honey, it says here scientists have discovered the true meaning of Christmas!" I guess you could say I did that 1,700 years ago!

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

My name is Nicholas. I was born in the year of our Lord 270 A.D., in the sea coast town of Patara in Asia Minor. (SLIDE) That's in the present-day country you call Turkey today. My mother and father were wealthy, and they raised me in a Christian home. Sadly, they died in the plague when I was a little boy. As I grew older I traveled often and got into the habit of using my money to help people. When I was nearly 50 years of age, I took a trip to the Holy Land. I wanted to see Galilee, Jerusalem, Bethlehem — the places where Jesus walked! During that journey God spoke to my heart and I was called by God to become a pastor in the church. This seemed the best way for me to really help people, so that's just what I did. I returned to a village near my birthplace, a town called Myra. The year was around 320 A.D. My job was to be the Bishop or Pastor of all the Christians in the area.

So, who am I really? I am Nicholas of Myra, Turkey. I lived 1,700 years ago. I was pastor of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in those days we Pastors and Bishops all dressed like this. We dressed this way to remind people who Jesus Christ is. My red bishop's coat is a reminder of the blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin. (*Cross yourself beatifically.*) The Lord be praised! My hat is called a miter. It is a symbol of Christ as the helmet of salvation. It has this funny shape to remind us of the tongues of fire that came to the apostles on Pentecost. This stole is a symbol of the yoke of Jesus, a simple reminder we are all his servants. And

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

this staff is a symbol of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and how I care for his flock.

And these shoes? Why, they are to keep my feet warm!

In my day it was dangerous to be a Christian. A man named Diocletian was the emperor or king. Aye! And he was such a bad person. He made himself to be a god and ordered everyone to worship him and to chant “Diocletian is lord!” I refused and I taught my people that only Jesus is Lord. So, the emperor rough-handled me. He persecuted my people and exiled me, forced me to live far away from my people. Then, God be praised! (*Cross yourself.*) Mean old Diocletian died and was replaced by Constantine as emperor! Thanks to Constantine’s mother who was a Christian Constantine became a Christian too. When he did Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. After that, he allowed me to return to Myra and my church. What joy! What a feast! What worship there was in the church when we met together in God’s house! Freedom! I was able to spend the rest of my life with my... er... God’s people!

For 22 years I watched over Christ’s church and during this time I grew especially fond of children. You see, I was single. My parents were both in heaven with Jesus. So, my family became the church and other people’s children became like my own, in the faith. How I loved to sit the little children on my lap and tell the stories of Jesus! One of my other joys was gift giving gifts to people.

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (*Cross yourself.*) The Lord be praised!

Once a man in my church went bankrupt, and, in order to pay his bills was going to have to sell his three beautiful daughters into slavery, a practice quite common in those days. When I heard about it, I prayed to God almighty, our provider and in the dark of night I snuck to the man's house and threw a bag of gold into an open window! Well, it seems the little girls had left their freshly washed stockings by the chimney to dry and don't you know that bag of gold landed in a stocking! Imagine everyone's surprise the next morning when they were dressing and they found enough money to pay off their debts and keep the family together.

Another time a young lady wanted to marry, but she had no dowry. That's a large sum of money and possessions that a woman's family gives to the man's family when they get married. Without a dowry, no man would want to marry the poor girl. Hearing of her troubles, I gathered some money, climbed on her roof in the black of night, and dropped some coins down her chimney. Wouldn't you know it! They also fell into her stockings hung to dry by the chimney with care! The next day she found the money, and a wedding was announced right away! Imagine their joy and mine as I got to perform their marriage and as the years past I also got to baptize their children!!

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

And here's the really important part...because these gifts were given in secret, there was no one to thank but God alone! And you know what else? I hear tell that on Christmas night people still hang their stockings by the fireplace in hopes that something good will fall into them by morning! Have you ever hung up stockings on Christmas eve and then woke up to find lots of goodies in them?

Just so you don't think I've never done anything but good works all my life, let me tell you about the time when I got into a fist fight. Back in the early days of the Church there were many Priests and Bishops teaching false things about Jesus. Our new emperor, Constantine became worried that all these religious arguments would destroy his new and fragile empire. So, Constantine ordered all of us Bishops to come together in the city of Nicaea for a special council meeting. Back in those days when the Church had a council meeting every Bishop came. At the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 over 300 Bishops attended. Our job was to fashion a single statement of what the Christian faith means. What do we believe about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Oh, the arguments! I became so angry with a fellow named Arius that I walked right up to him and slapped him across his face. I'm still ashamed of my actions and that I lost control in front of everyone, including Emperor Constantine. I was stripped of my Bishops garments, chained, and thrown in jail. During that night in jail, Jesus and his blessed mother Mary came to me in my cell. Jesus asked me why I was in jail and when I told him it

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

was because I loved him so much, he forgave me my sin. He gave me a copy of the Gospels and Mary dressed me in these very Bishop's vestments that I wear to this day. When the jailer came to give me breakfast in the morning he found my chains had been removed and my Bishop's clothing restored. When Constantine was told what had happened during the night, he himself released me from jail and restored me to my post as Bishop of Myra. By the way, the Council of Bishops decided with me and against that old heretic Arius. The result of our meeting in Nicaea in the year 325 was what you all will be reading in just a few moments, called the Nicæan Creed. It's our statement of confession of our common beliefs about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called me home to be with Him in Heaven in the year 342 A.D., on December 6. By then I was well known in the area and many Christians had begun to follow my example in Christ by giving gifts in secret. After I died my reputation grew and the Church declared me to be a Saint. Now I'm the patron saint of unwed girls, sailors and several cities, as well as the entire country of Poland.

I am one of the great cloud of witnesses that stands to encourage you in your own faith. I want to point you to Jesus Christ who saved me, who gave me children to love, who gave me a generous heart and a place to serve God. I want to point you to the God who became one of us that we might become one of his. And

## Saint Nicholas Speaks

I want to point you to your own town, right here in Pitsburg, or Arcanum, or Greenville, where ever you live as a place to serve God and God's people.

There are children right here who need to be told stories, gifts that are waiting to be given in secret. And just as I did, so can you. (*Cross your self.*) Praise be to God! May all of you use the gifts God has given to you to secretly help your friends and neighbors in need and may you be one of the ones who lets the light of Jesus Christ shine through you all the days of your life. Amen!

Now you may go and collect you shoes from the back of the Sanctuary. Please look inside before you put them on your feet! I'll be back after your Worship Service for a few minutes if anyone has any questions for me or if you would like your picture taken with old Saint Nicholas! Ho...Ho...Ho!!!