Saint Nicholas and the Secret Gifts

Ages 4 to 9 · About 10 minutes to read aloud · Feast day December 6

Virtue: Giving without expecting anything in return

The story in a nutshell

Young Nicholas uses the money his parents left him to help a poor family, dropping three bags of gold through their window at night and hurrying away before anyone can thank him. He grows up to be a kind bishop, and people all over the world still remember him by giving.

Before reading

- Look at the cover. Who do you think this is? Have you heard of Saint Nicholas?
- Think of a time someone gave you something. How did it feel?

While reading

- When the bag of gold lands in the stocking: who do you think left it? Why didn't he stay? *Listen for: He didn't want to be thanked.*
- When Nicholas becomes a bishop: what is a bishop? *Listen for: A leader in the Church who looks after God's people.*
- When children set out their shoes: does your family do anything on December 6?

After reading

- Why did Nicholas give the gold at night? *Listen for: He gave for love, not for thanks.*
- What could you give that doesn't cost any money? *Listen for: A hug, help, a drawing, sharing a toy, time.*
- The book says a gift fills the giver's heart with joy too. Has giving ever made you happy?
- *Older children:* Nicholas could have kept his money. Why do you think he gave it away? *Listen for: He loved God, and God had given him so much.*
- *Older children:* On Christmas Day, God gave the world the greatest gift of all. What was it? *Listen for: Jesus, his own Son. Saint Nicholas Day falls in Advent, as we wait for him.*

Words to explain

- **bishop**: a leader in the Church who cares for God's people
- **Myra**: the town by the sea where Nicholas lived, in what is now Turkey
- **patron saint**: a saint who prays for a group of people; Nicholas is the patron of children and sailors
- **feast day**: the day the Church remembers a saint each year

Be a Little Saint this week

The book ends with three challenges. Choose one to try together, or send all three home:

1. Do something kind for someone today without expecting anything in return.
2. With a grown-up's help, pick something of your own to give to a child who has less.
3. Leave a little surprise for someone in your family to find: a note, a drawing, or a treat.

Pray together

Dear God, thank you for all the good things you have given me. Help me to share them gladly, and without expecting anything in return, the way Saint Nicholas did, always giving from a heart full of love. Amen.

A note for the leader

Santa Claus. The back cover asks where Santa comes from. The story answers gently: it began with Saint Nicholas, who gave because of God's love. The book never says whether Santa is real, so it won't spoil Santa for any family.

Go further

Our free **Saint Nicholas Shoes pack** has a paper shoe for every child to find filled on December 6, a take-home page of three ways to give, and a letter for a class collection. More ideas for the feast day are at littlesaintsbighearts.com/saint-nicholas-day, and every free printable is at littlesaintsbighearts.com/printables.

Saint Nicholas and the Secret Gifts by Joseph Glazier. Free to copy for your class or program.