

Today is the Feast of St. Nicholas.

Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors, merchants, archers, thieves, children, and students; as well as many countries in both eastern and western Europe.

Nicholas is known as the "wonder-worker" in the eastern Church and there are several stories of miracles he worked during his life.

During a great famine, he happened upon a butcher who killed three travelers and attempted to sell them as ham. St. Nicholas raised them back to life.

In another story of a famine, a ship with wheat for the emperor arrived in port; and Nicholas asked the sailors to unload a portion of the wheat to help in the time of need. They did so; and when they later arrived at the capital, they were surprised to find that the weight of the load had not diminished. In addition, the supply of wheat that they had left for St. Nicholas was enough for two years supply.

And finally, the story that is most often told is of a poor man with three daughters. He didn't have enough money for a dowry for all three - which meant they wouldn't be able to get married; nor would they be able to support themselves after he died - leaving them homeless and destitute.

Hearing of their problem, St. Nicholas secretly tossed three bags of gold into the house through a window.

Nicholas is also known for his strict adherence to fasting and prayer throughout his life.

During this Season of Advent, we should focus on our own prayer. And when we pray, we should look to pray 'big.' That is, just as Nicholas was known as the wonder-worker; we should develop an understanding of God's generosity in our own lives ... expecting the miracles that He sends us or desires to send us - if only we would notice them.