

St. Nicholas is Coming to Town

Today is December 6th, so in regions across Europe, especially southern Bavaria in Germany, children are gearing up because St. Nicholas is coming to town. Yes, I'm talking about the real St. Nicholas and not the pay-per-hour Santa at your local mall or the North Pole.



Russian icon depicting St Nicholas with scenes from his life. Wiki Commons: Bjoertvedt

The Real Santa?

St. Nicholas also known as Nikolaos of Myra, was born in the third century in a small Greek village, but the area now belongs to Turkey. Nicholas' parents were extremely wealthy devout Christians who died when he was very young.

Nicholas, a true follower of Christianity like his parents, obeyed the word of Jesus to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor." His entire inheritance was used to assist

the poor, sick and those in need. He was later ordained Bishop of Myra (Turkey) and was known for his generosity, love for children and concern for sailors and ships.

What happens during St. Nicholas Day?

In many parts of Europe, a friend, neighbor, or relative dresses as St. Nicholas in a long robe and gold staff similar to the modern day Santa Claus attire. The St. Nicholas look-alike visits the children armed with a book full of the children's deeds, golden crosier, and a large sack full of gifts and candies.

St. Nicholas asks the children questions about their chores, homework, and good deeds. Most kids have rehearsed in advance and know exactly what they'll say to St. Nicholas in hopes of chocolate treats, money, or both.

Some children write St. Nicholas Christmas letters before the eve of St. Nicholas Day, fill plates or shoes with carrots for his white horse or donkey and wait until the following morning. If they've been good, they receive treats, if not, their shoes or boots might be full of German potatoes, coal pieces, or even twigs. Ah, the poor little ones ☹

Many parents want to emphasize the main point of St. Nicholas' visit which is the simplicity of gift-giving during Advent, then on Christmas Day the focus is on the Christ Child.

Happy St. Nicholas Day!