

## NICHOLAS OF MYRA

Matthew 22:37-40

V. 39: “**And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**”

Real people behind legends can inspire ordinary people to live extraordinary lives. God inspires His children with wild stories about legends. Then He shrinks the impossible into man-sized bites. Sometimes we swallow the nuggets, other times we set the person on a pedestal. *I can never be that good!* But, is God showing us what’s possible?

We learned about one guy, Naomh Padraig (See *St. Patrick* devotion), who was ordinary. But after surviving capture and slavery, he chose to serve an awesome God. He lived an extraordinary life, and is revered as the patron Saint of an entire country! Now, let’s explore the life of another ordinary boy named Nicholas, who lived in Turkey around 1000-1090.

Turkey is a Middle Eastern country wedged between two Seas, the Mediterranean on the South, and the Black Sea on the North. Turkey is West of Iran, and North of Iraq, and Syria. See the country in purple, below:



Nicholas was only son of

wealthy parents, Epiphanius and Johanna. As committed Christians, their lives proved faithful not only by words, but also through works. They supported missionaries, and gave generously to the poor. They enrolled Nicholas in theology and history classes—where he learned *The Didache*, similar to the Catechism—both guides to righteous living.

As a teenager, Nicholas' parents died in an epidemic. His Uncle Nicholas—for whom he was named—was bishop of Patara, and tutored his nephew in the monastery he founded. Nicholas always gave away money to the poor for food. When one man discovered that it was Nicholas who saved his family from disaster three times, he asked him, “Why didn't you let me know it was you who helped us?”

Nicholas responded, “Because it's good to give when only God knows about it.”

Nicholas was ordained as bishop, then cardinal of the Catholic Church. Barely five feet tall, he had a long white beard, and bald head. He refused a lavish life style, preferring to give food and gifts to the needy. His generosity laid the foundation for the model of unrewarded gifting that's celebrated each Christmas in another legend called Santa Claus.

### Take Home Nugget



St. Nicholas. Catholic cardinals' color is red.

From his youth, Nicholas loved others as himself. Traditions around the world celebrate his generous giving. He's claimed as Nicholas of Myra, of Bari, patron Saint of Sailors and the entire country of Greece. St. Nicholas' Eve is a gift-giving holiday celebrated from November 29<sup>th</sup> – December 7<sup>th</sup> in many countries.

Do these ordinary guys inspire you to follow Jesus, growing into an extraordinary person?

*Two commandments are equal. The first is to love God; the second is to love others.*

J.D. Griffith