

December 6

Nicholas of Myra (ca. 270-343) pastor

Today the Eastern and Western churches commemorate Nicholas of Myra, one of the most popular saints in Christian history.

Historical information about his life is scarce. Nicholas was born in Patara, Lycia around the year 270. He served as bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, and during his ministry he participated in the Council of Nicea, in the year 325.

According to tradition, he was an exceptionally kind and merciful pastor. He rescued a number of women from prostitution by giving them the money they needed to escape their state of necessity, and he came to the aid of an incalculable number of poor and oppressed people.

After his death, Nicholas was buried outside the city of Myra. His mortal remains were exhumed in the eleventh century and transferred to Bari, Italy, and he became that city's patron saint. But his popularity spread far and wide and he was soon venerated as the patron of many other cities, and even of entire nations, such as the immense Russia.

In the Middle Ages, hagiographic legends about him flourished in both the Eastern and Western churches. In the West, he is remembered by Dante and Jacob of Varazze in particular.

Today's date is that on which Nicholas died in 343, but he is also commemorated on May 9, the day his body was transferred to Bari.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Isa 61:1-3; 1 Tim 6:6-11; Mk 10:13-16

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Nicholas, bishop of Myra

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Nicholas, bishop (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

Apollonius and companions, martyrs (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (27 hatur/hedar):

James the Mangled (d. 420), martyr (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Nicholas, bishop and benefactor in Asia Minor

Ambrosius Blarer (d. 1564), reformer at Konstanz

MARONITES:

Nicholas the Thaumaturge, bishop of Myra, confessor

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Nicholas the Thaumaturge, archbishop of Myra

Alexander (Alexis) Nevskij (d. 1263), monk (Russian Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Nicholas, bishop of Myra

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Nicholas, bishop (Caldean Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Nicholas, bishop