



# The Bellringer

December 2009 AD

RAYMORE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

(816) 331-6166 Raymore, Missouri Est. 1871

www.RaymorePresbyterian.com



## THERE REALLY IS A SANTA CLAUS by Theophilus

(Information taken mostly from *There Really is a Santa Claus* by William J. Federer, 2003)

And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well... And so, as Tiny Tim observed, GOD bless Us, Every One!

*A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, 1843

The name Santa Claus comes from Dutch settlers who founded New Amsterdam (aka New York City). They celebrated the feast of St. Nicholas, but they pronounced it "Sant Nikolaas". This morphed into sant-nik-las... sannik-las... santa-klas... and finally Santa Claus. And that's how the name St. Nicholas became Santa Claus.

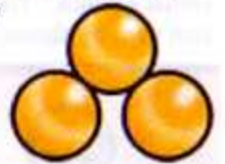
There really is an historical St. Nicholas. Nicolas was born in 280 AD to his elderly Christian parents Theophanes and Nonna. This wealthy family lived in a small village named Patara in the Asia Minor (Turkey) region of Lycia. The story is similar to that of Abraham and Sarah - wealthy older couple receive a gift from GOD. The parents knew this child had a special calling to help people, so they named him after his uncle who was the bishop of the town. Nicholas is Greek for victor or hero of the people.



His uncle watched Nicholas who was known for his virtue, study of scripture, abstinence, and temperance. Nicholas entered the Monastery of Holy Sion and was ordained for the ministry. His uncle went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land while Nicholas cared for the congregation. His parents died in a plague during this time and left him a considerable inheritance. Nicholas was very generous to the poor, the needy, and the hungry.

Nicholas is noted for helping a bankrupt man in Patara. A ruthless creditor planned to take his three daughters as slave prostitutes. Nicholas secretly tossed a small bag of gold for dowry money in order to allow the eldest daughter to be married instead of

being taken into slavery. The second daughter was saved later. The man kept watch at the time for the third daughter and discovered it was Nicholas who tossed the bag of gold which supposedly landed in one of her stockings set out by the fireplace to dry. Nicholas wanted the glory to go to GOD alone, and made the father swear an oath not to reveal where the gifts came from while he was living. This led to the tradition of hanging up stockings on the fireplace. It also led to the tradition of pawn brokers using the three gold balls as their symbol as a place to help people in financial trouble.



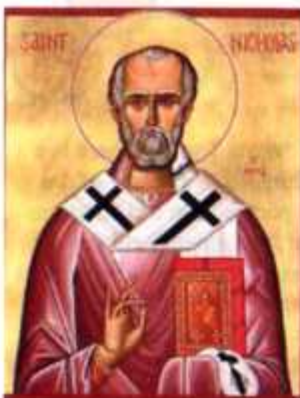
In 300 AD Nicholas left Patara for the large coastal city of Myra, Lycia. There is a long and interesting story of how he became archbishop (at age 20) in place of the newly deceased archbishop John. This was a time of great persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire. Diocletian, along with his co-regent Maximian, held the Council of Nicomedia in 302 AD. They resolved to suppress Christianity throughout the empire. On February 24, 303 AD, they demolished the cathedral of Nicomedia, and then many others followed. By 303-304 AD, Nicholas was imprisoned for several years, and sometimes whole towns were massacred because of their faith in Jesus Christ. On May 1, 305 AD a miracle occurred. Emperor Diocletian abdicated his throne because of painful intestinal illness - the only Roman Emperor to resign peacefully. Maximian and Galerius soon restored the persecutions.

Constantine the Great came to partial power in 306 AD at York England. He conquered Rome in 312 AD at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Just before the battle he saw a sign from Christ in the sky "In Hoc Signo Vinces" which is Latin for "In This Sign You Will Conquer". He had his troops put crosses on their shields and banners in honor of Jesus Christ, and he won the Western Roman Empire. Constantine was the first Roman Emperor to be a Christian. He and Licinius (East Emperor) issued the Edict of Toleration in 313 AD that ended persecution of Christians. By 324 AD Constantine had defeated Licinius and he became the world ruler.



Constantine initiated the Council of Nicaea with 318 bishops from May 20 thru June 19, 325 AD. Christian leaders protected the teachings that Jesus was as eternally divine as the Father. The Arian Heresy, named after Arius their leader, taught Jesus was inferior to the Father and not GOD. The bishops met at Constantine's lake house to resolve this. They

voted 316 to 2 in favor of "The Nicene Creed" profession of faith which presents the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They also set in stone some church rules for making future laws. Easter was set as the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox. The Nicene Creed was further revised in 381 AD into today's version used by almost all Christians throughout the world.



Our Santa Claus was a well know bishop at the Council of Nicaea. He was part of history as the Bishop of Myra. Nicholas was well respected for his knowledge of scripture, for his long service to the people, and also for the persecution he endured.

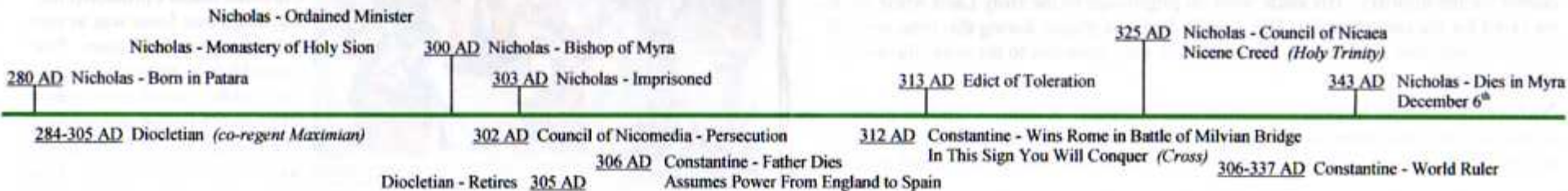
Nicholas' last words were from Psalm 11  
**"In the LORD I put my trust!"**  
 He died in Myra December 6, 343 AD

Italian sailors, in 1087, moved the bones of St. Nicholas from Myra, Lycia to Bari, Italy. The Muslims were conquering Turkey and would have destroyed them. Tourists today visit the great Basilica di San Nicola in Bari.

The American Santa Claus was written about by the popular writer Irving Washington in 1809. The saint would arrive on horseback each Eve of Saint Nicholas (December 6<sup>th</sup>). The fully Americanized Saint Nick came in 1823 from the poem written by Clement C. Moore. He had written it for his children the year before and was quickly published. *A Visit From Saint Nicholas* - more commonly known as *The Night Before Christmas*. The Episcopalian minister Moore added details such as the names of the reindeer; but Santa Claus's laughs, winks, nods, elf-likeness, and going up the chimney were from the earlier 1809 story.



The Civil War cartoonist Thomas Nast drew Santa Claus for *Harper's Weekly* in 1862, supporting the Union. He continued his drawings for 30 years with a small elf-like Santa who changed from a tan coat to the traditional red coat of today.



Coca-Cola® added Santa Claus to its advertising in 1930 by having Fred Mizen paint a mural in the Famous Barr Co. department store in St. Louis, Missouri. This was home to the world's largest soda fountain. The D'Arcy Advertising Agency in St. Louis commissioned Haddon Sundblom to paint Santa Claus in 1931 and for the next 33 years. These extremely popular paintings are displayed in Atlanta, Georgia at Coca-Cola's World Headquarters.



**The Real Santa Claus and Jesus Christ...**

St. Nicholas was a real man. His life was changed by the Word of GOD. He followed the admonition of Jesus who said "sell what you have and give to the poor." That passage changed Nicholas' life. He was able to live a richer life even through the trials and persecution he endured. Santa Claus is all about giving, and doing so for the Glory of GOD in the name of Jesus Christ. Christmas celebrates GOD's gift to us.



For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

We contemplate on the meaning of the season and our purpose in life. The Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us our purpose...

To bring Glory to GOD,  
and enjoy Him forever.

Like Jesus, Nicholas was begotten of his wealthy father - lived a life serving others - to bring glory to his Father's name.





**“Family of the Month”**  
**The Collins Family**

Our little family started back in February 1998 when Eric and I were married after a yearlong engagement. We had met while we were in college (at Missouri State University) but we “officially” met through family, which was weird!

In January of 2002, Jacob joined our group and we were just ecstatic having him in our family! He was just too much fun! When Jacob was first born, Eric got a notion to move on to something bigger and better and decided to go to law school! We were lucky we had the opportunity for him to go back to school and further his education as we had a lot of help from parents! Lucky for us, maybe not for them, we were able to move into my parents’ house for a couple of years while Eric was in school. I got a great job with my current employer, Varnum Armstrong Deeter LLC and have been very blessed with absolutely loving the people I work with. The October before he graduated, we were able to move into our first home in Raymore. What a great community we have found!

We had decided we really needed to get ourselves involved in a church and bring our children up with the same kind of values we were brought up with. We started our search and we just so happened to really really like the first church we visited! So, our church family started in 2004 with Raymore Presbyterian and we have loved this church family ever since then!

In May of 2005 Eric graduated from law school from UMKC (5<sup>th</sup> in his class, I might add! ☺) and was hired on at Husch and Eppenberger LLC. We figured we didn’t have enough to do in our lives so Audrey came onto the scene in February 2006! Wow! Now we are able to provide entertainment to church on Sunday mornings!

This past September, Eric got a great opportunity to open up his own law firm with his best friend from high school. So now we have the law firm of Collins & Jones, PC right here in Raymore! (With a second location in Osceola, MO). Alright, enough with my advertising plug!

I think I can speak for my family when I say that we have definitely found great friends and family at this church! We have enjoyed it very much and we hope to continue to enjoy it for years to come! (Hopefully a little more quietly than we have in the past!)

**December Bible Study**  
**Dates**

Bible study will only be meeting twice in the month of December  
We will meet on 12/02 & 12/09.

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**LOST PEN!**

Mr. Weddle has lost a wood walnut ballpoint pen with chrome trim. It was lost or misplaced at the church on Sunday, November 1. The pen is a part of a matched set and is a keepsake. If found, please contact Wes Weddle at 816-331-3878

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**GUEST SPEAKER!**

Pastor Dave and family will be out of town on December 27 and Danny Barnes will be filling the pulpit in his absence.

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**Christmas Basket Update!**

The youth reports collecting \$877 from donations to the basket! WOW! This does not include the sales from the calendars! They hope to have \$1000.00 to use! Plans are under way to adopt a local family and give to some local nursing homes as well! Thanks to all who donated so generously!



