



Christian Education Bulletin Insert, December, 2001

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December 6, St. Nicholas Day Saint Nicholas was bishop of Myra in S.W. Turkey in the 4th century and is usually shown wearing his bishop's robes. Today his town is called Mugla - maybe you can find it on a map. He is the patron saint of many groups including children, sailors and parish clerks. There are many legends about him. The most famous one says that he threw three bags of gold into the bedroom of three daughters of a nobleman who had lost all his money. This gave them dowries so they could get married. Another version of the story says that he put the money into the girls' stockings which were hanging on the ends of their beds and their father chased him to find out who this kind man was. This story may be why we hang up stockings at Christmas, and explain the custom of putting chocolate coins, or new coins in the toe.

In Germany, Holland and Austria, St Nicholas visits children on December 6 and fills the shoes they have left out for him with candy, nuts and fruit. Since it is said that St Nicholas knows the name of every child he visits, parents in these countries can buy the initial letter of the each child's first name in chocolate. Sometimes alphabet cookies might also be made. Chocolate letters are available in some stores. (Walmart tell me they usually have them)

Talk about gift giving. How do you choose what to give someone? What have your favourite gifts been and why? What made them stand out? You might mention that St Nicholas gave without expecting anything back, as Jesus did.

December 13, St Lucy or Santa Lucia St Lucy is another 4th century saint but she lived in Syracuse in Sicily. At that time, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, Christians were being persecuted. It is said that Lucy showed her Christian faith by giving gifts to the poor, including those hiding in the catacombs, but was betrayed to the Romans and killed. Her special day is celebrated in

Sweden. Girls dress in white dresses with red sashes and wear crowns of candles. They take coffee and warm bread or cakes to family and friends early in the morning. Perhaps the children in the family might like to do this for their parents on the weekend closest to St Lucy's day.

A St Lucy crown may be made with a cardboard headband and some cardboard tubes about 10 cm long. Cover the outside of the tubes with plain white paper and attach 'flames' made from aluminum foil and red or yellow paper to the tops. Staple four such 'candles' to each headband. If you want to make it even more fancy, add paper 'leaves' or some artificial leaf garland to the headband.

It is said that Lucy may have been blinded by her captors before they killed her, but that her eyes were miraculously healed. Because of this, she is the patron saint of those who have eye diseases. Find out how the blind are helped to 'see' through special training, the use of guide dogs, talking books and magazines and braille publications. Your public library is a great source of information, as is the internet. (Go to www.cnib.ca, click on divisions, then library, then general information, and from there find braille and an article called "The Six Magic Dots". Can you write your name using the braille alphabet?)

Jesus' Baby Album

Do you have baby albums for your family members? If not, maybe you can borrow a neighbour's to get the idea. Perhaps there are stories about the parents' reactions to finding out about the upcoming new arrival, maybe a newspaper announcement of the birth is included, a number of pictures of the baby, pictures of the parents, the birth weight, names of family members etc. Over the Christmas holidays, make an album for the baby Jesus. Read the Bible stories in Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 1 and 2 or in a children's Bible. Draw and colour pictures for various scenes. Write a birth announcement for the Bethlehem Gazette. Write a news story about the sighting of a new star or the arrival of the mysterious wise men from the east. Draw up a family tree. Use your imagination! Have different members of the family contribute according to age and talents. Show your album to family and friends.

For Fun

What do you get when you cross Santa Claus with a Flying Saucer?