

## Hope

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Nicholas of Myra, Asia Minor (modern Turkey) died December 6, 343 at the age of seventy-three. He had been Bishop there in the early Catholic Church.

Bishop Nicholas' life may be more fiction than fact, for he is reported to have given much of his Church's treasure away, feeding and clothing the poor, especially in winter, almost secretly. The benefactors, children and women from the area of his responsibility. These tales were retold, exaggerated there, then and in other lands. So much so that his name became translated to the German, **Santa Claus**. Today, Santa's gives much more than St Nicholas might have thought possible. For in fact, at the sight of the man in the red suit on today's streets, children's expectations have them reach for any gift of friendship, with a smile parents expect.

In 325 Bishop Nicholas answered the call of the Roman Emperor Constantine to gather in the city of Niceae, in Burka, Turkey. Here with fellow Bishops, they established the then beliefs of the Catholic Church, which then and today, is repeated by Roman Catholics as the Nicene Creed. Nicholas was the 113th signatory of that document.

At home Bishop Nicholas continued to be known for gift giving to the young, especially those in material need. His thought, give them hope.

How is hope generated in the human mind? Most likely it begins when the child, receives the unearned, will come to hope this will continue in their life. Then, will understand hope is an act they should develop at an early age.

For the Zirkelbach family St Nicholas day was proposed as a party. For 55 years we have celebrated St Nicholas Day, as nearly possible to December 6.

Initially in the days before December 6, Barbara, assorted neighbors and friends, would bake a thousand plus cookies, in a dozen shapes, hinting of Christmas. Then that Dec 6 afternoon the children of the neighborhood would be invited to our house, offered soup and finger food, be provided with different colored frostings in squeeze bottles, encouraged to decorate the cookie chosen, any way they choose. Small prizes awarded for creativity, exaggerations, beauty, anything There would be no losers.







In the evening, their parent came to the same event, and believe it or not, most times they could not match their progeny's creativity. Of course, parent were offered alcohol to loosen inhibitions.



So it shall be this holiday season at a grandson's condominium, when hope is initiated for our friends, family, and as in the past years have soups, finger food, cookie coloring and friendship, allowing each to totally concentrate on that small cookie before them, make it their creation. All the while looking forward to the Christmas season as much more than a receiving and exchange of material gifts.