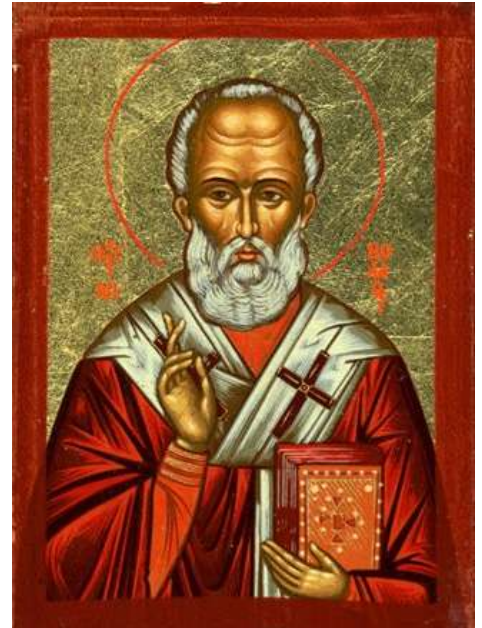


BULGARIA

St. Nicholas' Day

The Day of St. Nicholas, Nikola in Bulgarian, is celebrated on December 6 and it's one of the most respected traditional holidays in. In every home a fish dish is prepared for that great day. St. Nicholas is most popular as patron of the sea, rivers and lakes, of fishermen and sailors. Folk tradition adds that the saint is also the master of winter colds and snow. And he is also revered as the guardian of the family and the family property.

A similar story is sung in a folk song from the region of Sofia. In it St. Nikola started to build a church that would suit the grandeur of God, with walls of silk and silver, and with a roof of gold. But before finishing the last door, the gold was over. Then St. Nikola became a monk and went among people. They



donated as much as they could, to build the church. However the raised funds were not enough. So, a solution occurred to him. He took his dense fishing-net, threw them in the white sacred sea, and a barbell got caught in it. A priceless stone shone on its head. St. Nikola took it and completed the magnificent church. And the catch he gave to people, to eat fish and drink wine to the glory of God.

CZECH REPUBLIC

St. Nicholas' Day

It is a special time when children receive sweets and small gifts. They used to be apples, nuts and sweets, while now they are chocolate, toy cars and other small presents. St. Nicholas Day also reminds people that Baby Jesus will soon be here.

Angels lower St. Nicholas, with a basket of apples, nuts, and candies, down from heaven on a heavy golden cord. On December 5th, the eve of St. Nicholas Day, three figures—kindly St. Nicholas who gives gifts to children, a Devil who comes to take bad children away, and an Angel who pleads on their behalf—form a procession marking the beginning of the Christmas season. The streets are



December 6th

filled with devils rattling chains, St. Nicholases with white cotton beards, long robes and bishops' staffs, and angels with paper wings on their way to visit small children in their homes.

Traditionally, St. Nicholas quizzed children on the prayer-book and the Bible. Today, however, the questions are mostly about the previous year's behavior. The angel writes a record for each child in a large book and the children sing or say a poem to the saint. The devil rattles his chains, threatening to carry bad children off, but the angel, with a gold star on her forehead and dressed in a white gown, protects the children.

SPAIN

Day of the Constitution