



Saint Nicholas by Melisa Nielsen

I am often asked how Saint Nicholas makes his journey to see all the world's children in one night. I am also asked if he is real and alive. This is my answer...liberties are taken for sure.

"Mama, is Nicholas real?"

"Oh yes, my sweet child. Very real. Nicholas was a child in a town called Myra, many, many years ago. He lived about 200 years after Jesus did. Nicholas came from a very wealthy family. They had a lot of money and they loved helping and caring for anyone that was struggling. Often Nicholas

would take a sack of grain to a hungry family and then that family would come to Nicholas and ask if they could help him deliver sacks to other hungry families. His mother also kept a garden so large that it was easy to help feed the people in the town that had no food. The people were so grateful that they would go to his mother and ask to help tend the garden so they could help give to others. It became a beautiful system of everyone helping everyone else.

As Nicholas grew, he decided he wanted to serve God as a priest. He wanted to be a priest in the early Christian church. Many priests do not marry. Nicholas did not marry, but he loved to help families that were planning weddings by helping them with the money they needed. Nicholas also loved giving gifts to children. Nicholas is known for many wonderful deeds and acts in his service to God and all of God's children. When Nicholas was getting old, he was visited by a very special angel. This angel's name was Azrael. Azrael is the angel that visits us to take us back home when we die. Nicholas knew that the angle was going to take him home but he was not ready. "Please," said Nicholas, "Please ask our dear Lord if I might have a fate that is different. For I serve so many here. I should love to continue to serve." Nicholas fell to his knees to pray. "Please Lord, may I walk with you all my days? May I have the fate of brother Enoch or John?"

Azrael was so moved by Nicholas' prayer that he returned to Saint Peter's gates with a plea on his behalf.

The Lord looked down to Nicholas and smiled. For here was a man that brought joy to many. He sent Azrael back to gather Nicholas but also sent him with John, the Beloved. When they arrived to see Nicholas, he was surprised. John sat with Nicholas and explained "Our Father has sent me to give you a special message. He would gladly give you more time here to serve but would like you to do it in a very special way. Once a year for three days, a door in heaven will open for you to go and visit the children and those who welcome you. The other days you may walk with me, spreading light to those who know not who we are."

Nicholas was over joyed and quickly left with his two new friends."

"Mama, why three days?"

"Oh...well you see our world is vast and when it is day here, it is night somewhere else. Some children have already celebrated their Saint Nicholas day! Now it is time for you to go to sleep so you may celebrate yours."