Saint Nicholas of Myra

The Secret Gift

Ages about 7-11 | Video 7:24 | Group lesson about 25-35 minutes

Central truth Nicholas used what he had to help a family in need. His repeated gifts show generosity directed toward people's good rather than the giver's fame.

Learning goals Children will explain why Nicholas gave quietly, notice that he returned to meet an ongoing need, and plan an age-appropriate gift of care.

Gather Video access, one handout per child, pencils or crayons, and a Bible.

Watch online Open this video on Servus Dei

Before watching | 2 minutes

Ask: What makes a gift helpful? Invite children to notice both what Nicholas gives and why he does not want a crowd applauding him.

Watch and notice

Watch for the three visits. Pause before the third gift if useful: why is Nicholas returning, and what is different about the father's plan this time?

Talk together | 6-8 minutes

1. What lesson from his parents did Nicholas remember?
We can use what we have to meet real needs. His wealth could become practical help instead of staying unused.

2. Why did he return with another gift?
There were still daughters needing help. He paid attention to the continuing need rather than treating one gift as the end of caring.

3. What did he say when the father discovered him?
He directed the father's gratitude toward God. He wanted the family helped, not a reputation for being impressive.

4. Can children be generous without bags of gold?
Yes. Time, attention, a shared item, and useful help can be gifts. Children should ask permission before giving belongings or money.

Then respond and pray Allow 6-8 minutes for a handout or the activity on page 2; finish with the closing prayer.

Lead the response

Saint Nicholas of Myra

Short family lesson Watch the video, choose one recall question and one application question, then pray. About 12-18 minutes; the handout is optional.

Choose a handout

Draw & Tell Children draw the family receiving needed help and choose a gift of time or kindness they can offer. Encourage attention to the recipient rather than a picture of praise for the giver.

Read & Write Children connect a gift with a need, compare two motives for giving, and write a realistic plan with an adult's help.

Adapt by readiness

Ages 7-8: offer choices such as helping tidy, sharing crayons, or making a card. Ask whom the gift helps.

Ages 9-11: discuss why receiving thanks is fine even when praise is not the purpose. Consider why one act may need follow-through.

The gift behind the gift | Optional 4 minutes

Name three ordinary gifts: reading with someone, lending a pencil, and setting the table. Children identify what each offers beyond an object: company, a chance to participate, or practical help. Choose one to try.

Look for understanding Look for another person's need as the reason for giving. A plan should be useful, permitted, and possible without expecting repayment.

Closing prayer Jesus, make our hearts generous. Help us notice needs, share wisely, and give with love. Saint Nicholas, pray for us. Amen.

At home Plan a quiet kindness with a trusted adult. It can be a pleasant surprise, but it should never require hiding something unsafe from a caregiver.

Handout answer notes All three daughters needed help. Loving generosity focuses on the recipient's good. Accept a permitted gift of time, attention, belongings, or practical assistance.

Teach with care

The story includes the death of Nicholas's parents. Acknowledge his sadness without asking children to discuss losses. Keep the daughters' situation simple: the family needed help for a secure future. The three gifts are a traditional story, with different details in different tellings. A dowry was a historical marriage custom, not the measure of a woman's worth. Avoid reenacting secret nighttime visits. Leave family Santa traditions to caregivers.

Words to explain Generosity: sharing freely for another person's good. Inheritance: belongings passed on after someone dies. Bishop: a shepherd who teaches and cares for a local Church.

Sources for the leader

Life and gift tradition: Vatican News: Saint Nicholas
Giving without display: Matthew 6:1-4