

3 December

Patronal Festival

Nicholas

Bishop c.326 (*Feast Day 6 December*)

Almighty Father, lover of souls, who chose your servant Nicholas to be a Bishop in the Church, that he might give freely out of the treasures of your grace: make us mindful of the needs of others and, as we have received, so teach us also to give; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

6 December

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Bishop c.326**

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6 December

**Nicholas
Bishop of Myra**

Nicholas was a fourth-century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor (in what is now southern Turkey). His reputation as a worker of wonders was enhanced by a ninth-century author of his hagiography and he is now best known through these stories. Many of them concern his love and care for children, how he fed the hungry, healed the sick and cared for the oppressed. He saved three girls from a life of prostitution by providing them with dowries and so developed the tradition of bearing gifts to children on his feast day, a practice appropriated for the Christmas celebrations. Nicholas is also one of the patron saints of Russia.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'

7 December

**Ambrose
Bishop of Milan,
Teacher of the Faith
397**

God of hosts, who called Ambrose from the governor's throne to be a bishop in your Church and an intrepid champion of your faithful people: mercifully grant that, as he did not fear to rebuke rulers, so we, with like courage, may contend for the faith we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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7 December

**Ambrose
Bishop of Milan,
Teacher of the Faith**

Born in Trier in 339, Ambrose was of an aristocratic family and was governor of northern Italy, with his headquarters in Milan. Whilst trying to bring peace to the Christian community, with Arianism and orthodoxy each trying to gain the election of its candidate as bishop, Ambrose, known and respected by all, though not yet baptised, found himself being urged to accept the rôle of bishop, the gathered Christian populace taking up the cry, 'Ambrose for bishop'. He finally accepted, was baptised, and was consecrated on this day in the year 374. Ambrose proved his worth, becoming a teacher and preacher of great renown, promoting the essential divinity of Christ as being at the centre of Christian faith. He wrote hymns which gave a clear understanding of orthodox teaching, ensuring that what the people prayed was what they believed, and vice versa. He came up against the imperial powers and, with the support of the whole community, stood firm against the interference of the State in matters of the Church and faith. Ambrose died on Easter Eve, 4 April, in the year 397.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'

8 December

**The Conception of the
Blessed Virgin Mary**

Almighty and everlasting God, who stooped to raise fallen humanity through the child-bearing of blessed Mary: grant that we, who have seen your glory revealed in our human nature and your love made perfect in our weakness, may daily be renewed in your image and conformed to the pattern of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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8 December

**The Conception of the Blessed Virgin
Mary**

This festival in honour of the conception of the mother of our Lord is celebrated on this day in both the eastern and western Church. The feast, which dates from the seventh century, acknowledges the preparation by God of his people to receive their Saviour and Lord, putting 'heaven in ordinary' and showing that mortal flesh can indeed bring Christ to the world.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'