

Merry Christmas

& Happy New Year Coloring Book



Merry Christmas!

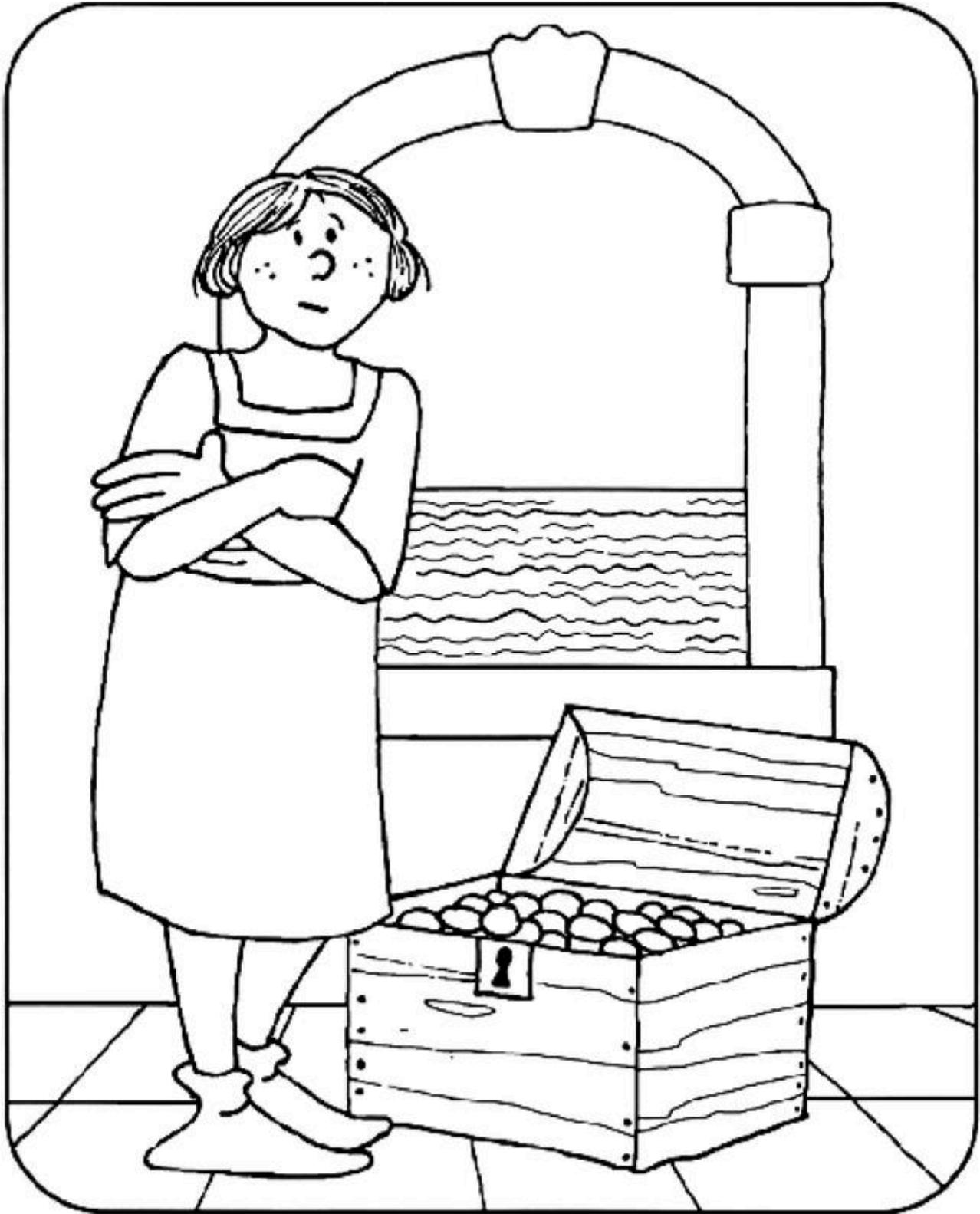
According to Rick Warren's *The Purpose of Christmas*, “Christmas is a party. Specifically, it's a birthday party — for Jesus — and birthdays are meant to be celebrated. It's why we say ‘Merry Christmas!’”



In addition to observing the birth of Jesus, Christmas is a time when people and families celebrate holiday traditions. Traditions are beliefs and ways of doing things that are handed down from the older generation to the younger generation. Saint Nicholas — or Santa Claus — as he is more widely known — represents one of our most beloved and enduring Christmas traditions.

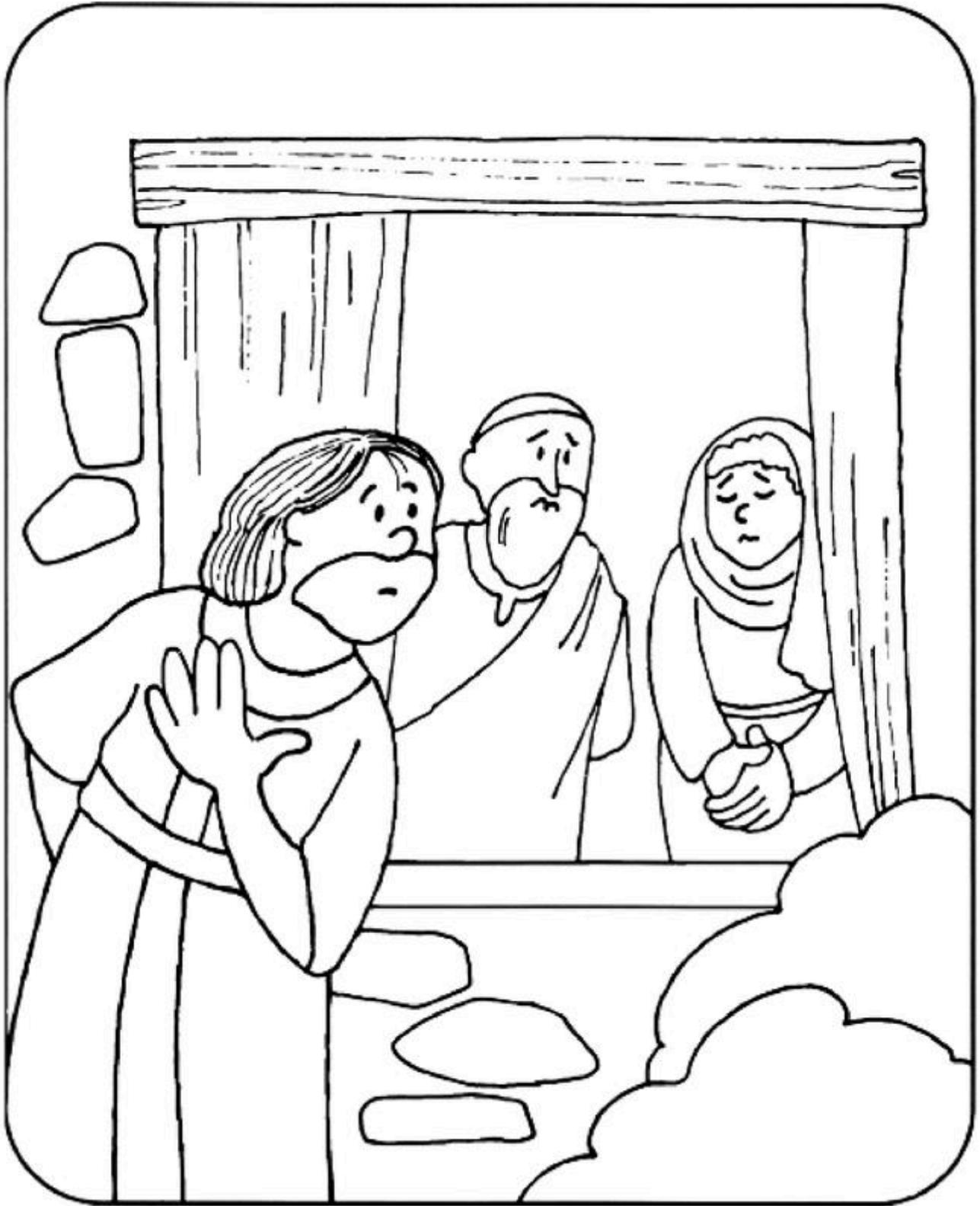
SPJST is happy to present the life and times of Saint Nicholas! We hope you enjoy the story!
Happy coloring!





From *La Vita di San Nicola* by Franca Vitali; copyright © 2004 Paoline Editoriale Libri, Copyright © 2014 St. Nicholas Center, www.stnicholascenter.org

Nicholas was born around AD 260 in Patara, Asia Minor, now Turkey. His family was very rich. When his parents died, Nicholas inherited a huge fortune.



Nicholas was generous and made good use of his riches, always helping those in need. One day he heard about a man who was in despair . . .



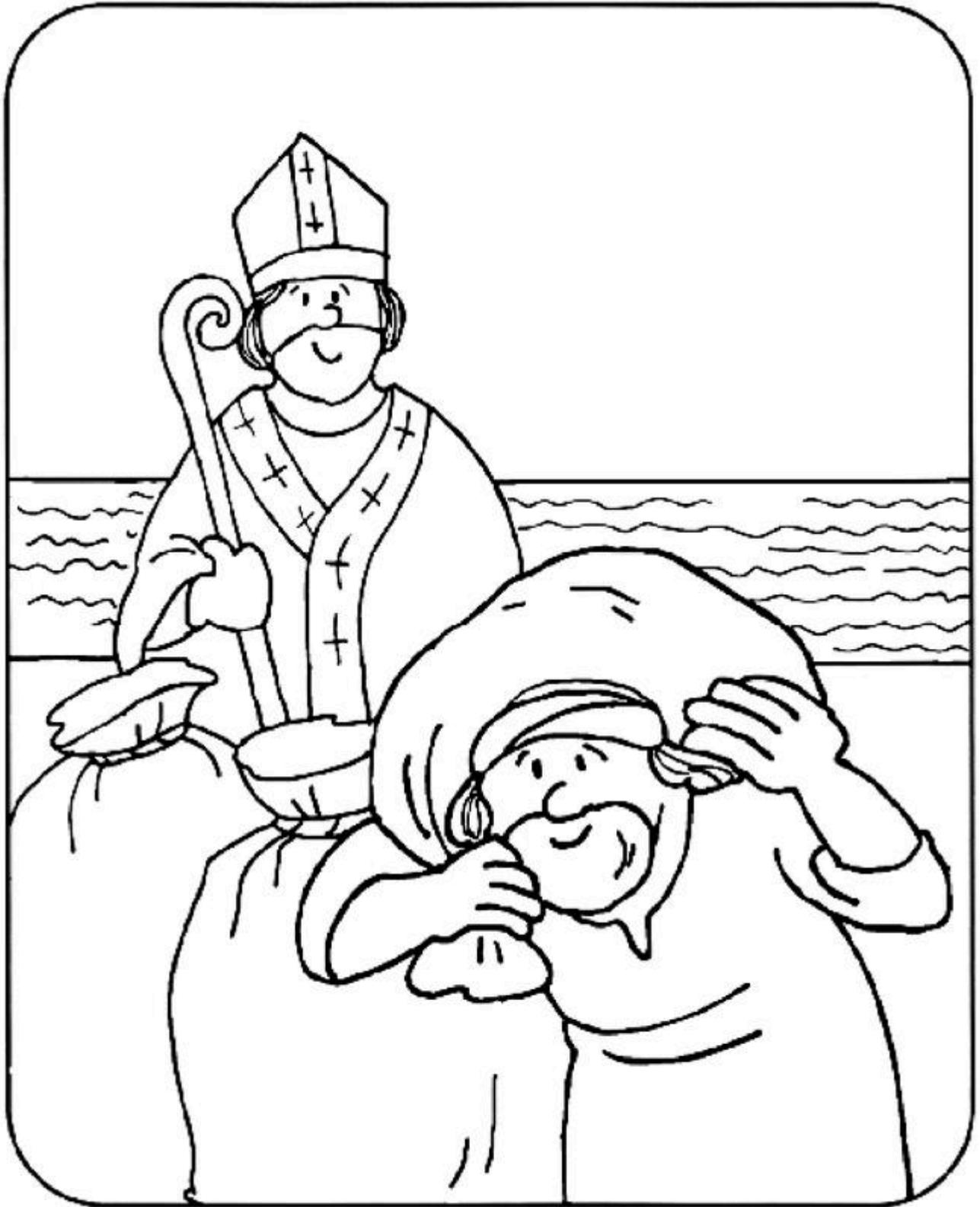
The man had become so poor that he could no longer support his family. That night, Nicholas secretly delivered a bag filled with gold coins to the man's house.



The next morning the poor man could not believe his eyes! Thanks to the money from Nicholas, he was able to take care of all his money problems and make a better life for his family.



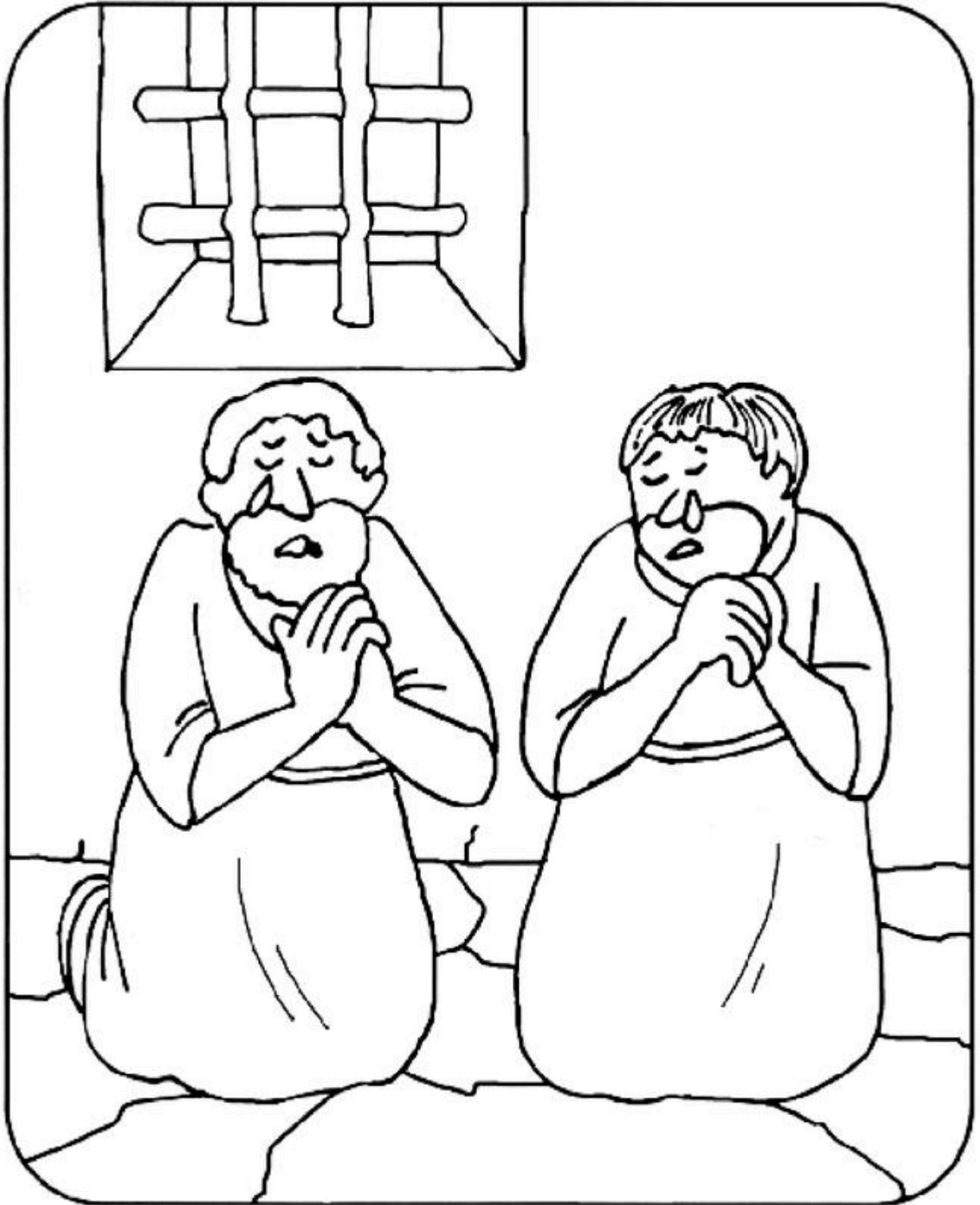
Nicholas went to the city of Myra where the city was selecting a new bishop. It was determined that the first person to enter the church that day would be selected. It was Nicholas!



Bishop Nicholas worked hard for his people. During a terrible famine in Myra, he secured a large amount of wheat to feed the people.



Another time, speaking boldly, Bishop Nicholas saved the lives of his fellow citizens who were about to be executed by the Romans.



Later, two officers were threatened with the same fate and were imprisoned unjustly. They began to pray, asking help from Bishop Nicholas.



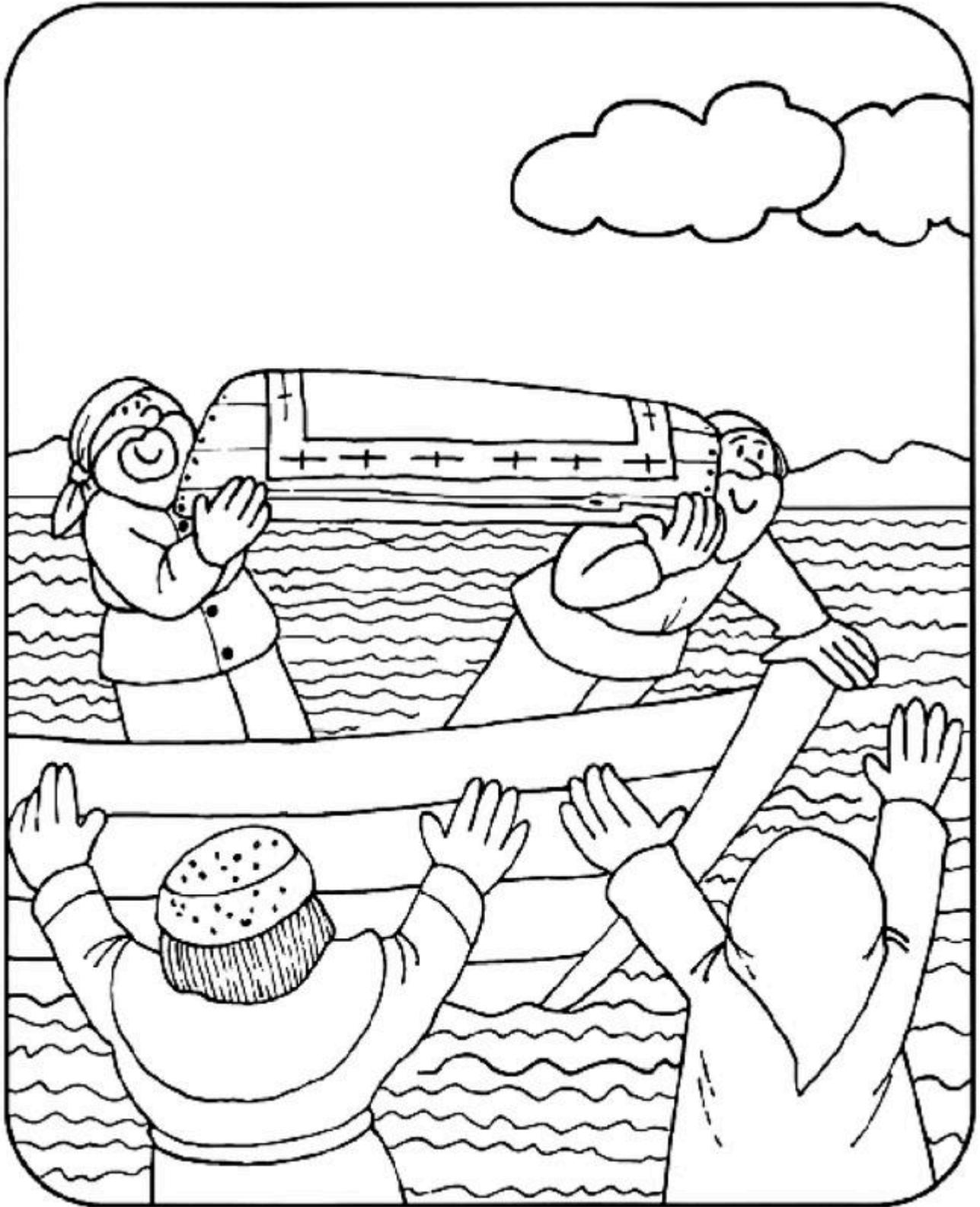
That night, Bishop Nicholas appeared in a dream to Emperor Constantine, proving the innocence of the two officers. They were immediately released.



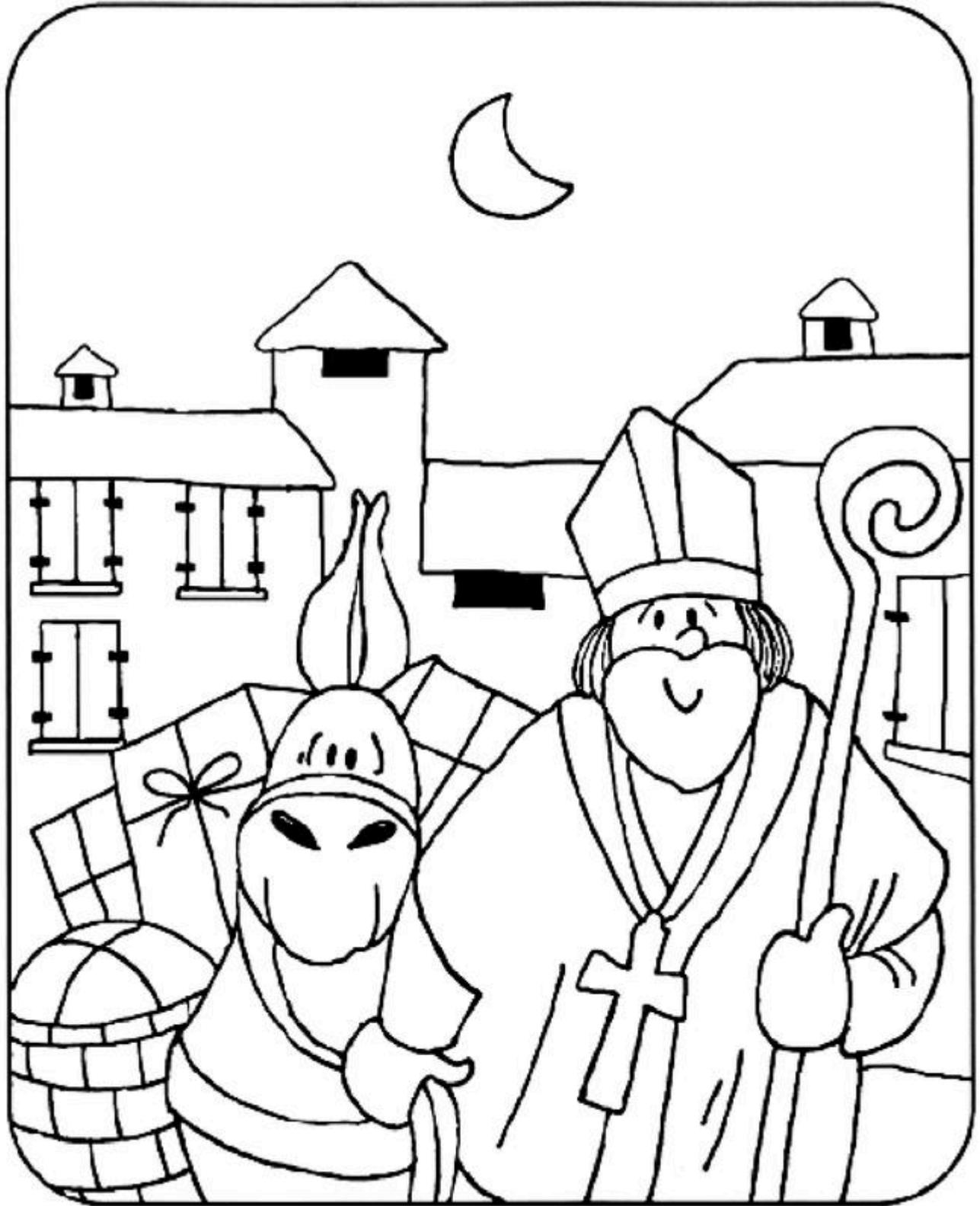
When the Emperor asked citizens of Myra for unreasonably high taxes, Bishop Nicholas went in person to visit with Constantine and got him to undo the unfair taxes.



Bishop Nicholas was also said to protect sailors at sea, calming storms and saving ships and sailors.



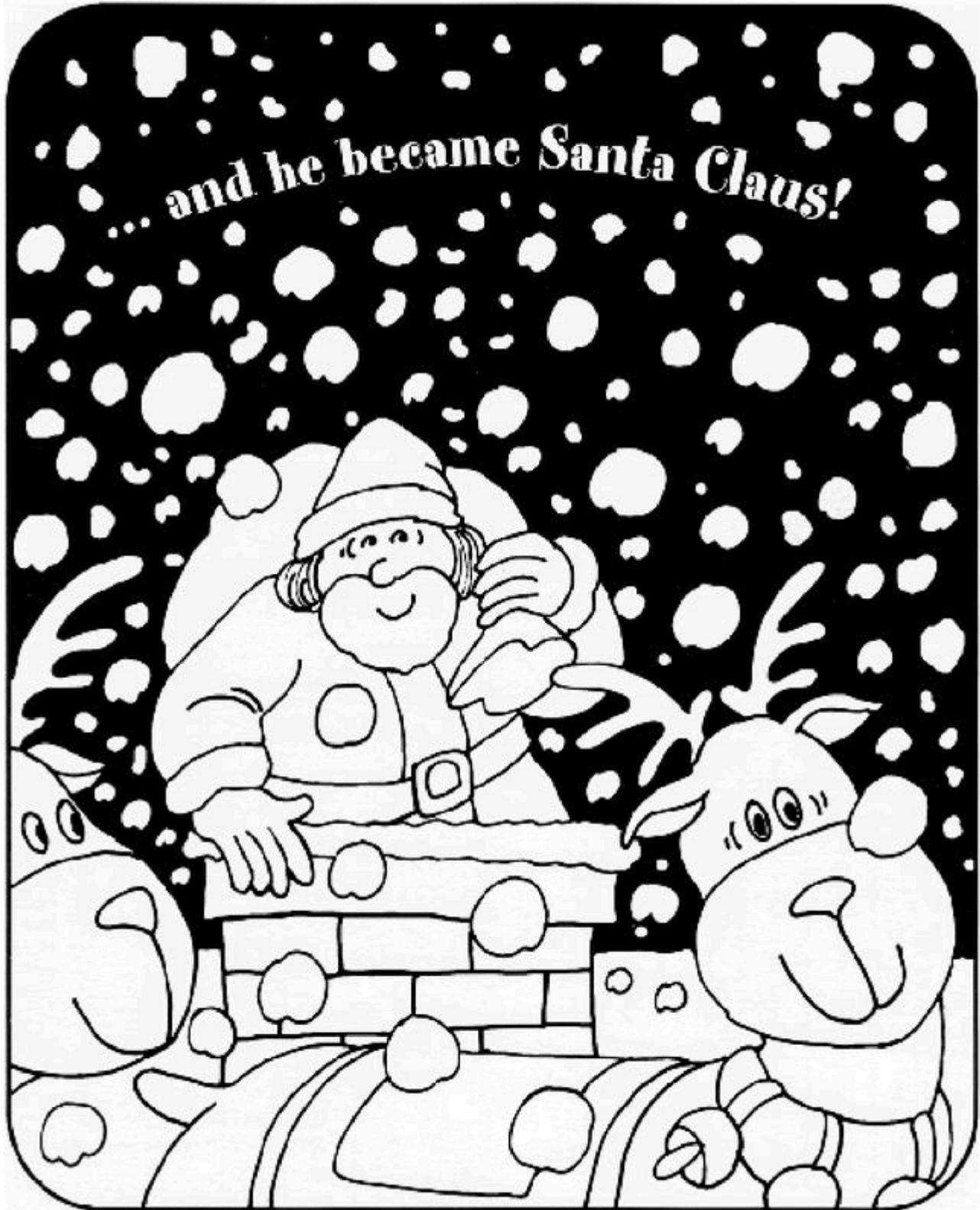
In 1087, long after Saint Nicholas died in AD 342, Italian sailors delivered his remains from Myra to Bari, Italy. Nicholas was declared the Patron Saint of Bari.



Since the Middle Ages, the night of December 6 has been celebrated throughout Europe as the Feast Day of Saint Nicholas. On that night, according to legend, Saint Nicholas brings gifts to children. A donkey helps him make his deliveries!



Over the years, immigrants from different countries brought the story of Saint Nicholas to the United States and to countries all over the world.



Over time, Saint Nicholas's donkey evolved to reindeer pulling a sleigh. His cape became a red suit trimmed with fur and his bishop's pointed miter hat became a stocking cap! Saint Nicholas and his spirit of giving lives on!

Christmas Traditions on the Front Cover

TOP ROW, LEFT to RIGHT: 1. That's a sprig of mistletoe! The custom of kissing under the mistletoe goes back to late 18th century England. The tradition dictates that a man was allowed to kiss any woman standing underneath mistletoe, and that bad luck would befall any woman who refused the kiss. One variation on the tradition stated that with each kiss a berry was to be plucked from the mistletoe, and the kissing must stop after all the berries had been removed. 2. That's a 2016 Christmas stamp of the U.S. Postal Service! The image is that of "Madonna and Child" painted in 1470 by a follower of Fra Filippo Lippi and Pesellino. Since 1965 the National Gallery of Art has collaborated with the United States Postal Service to select a national Christmas stamp. 3. That's a Christmas tree! The modern Christmas tree was developed in early modern Germany with predecessors that can be traced to the 16th and possibly 15th century, in which devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. The tree was traditionally decorated with edibles such as apples, nuts, or other foods. In the 18th century, it began to be illuminated by candles which were ultimately replaced by Christmas lights after the advent of electrification.

SECOND ROW, LEFT to RIGHT: 1. That's Santa Claus! Santa Claus, also known as Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Kris Kringle, Father Christmas, or simply Santa, is a legendary figure of Western culture who is said to bring gifts to the homes of well-behaved children on Christmas Eve and the early morning hours of Christmas Day. The modern Santa Claus grew out of traditions surrounding the historical Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century Greek bishop and gift-giver of Myra. 2. That's a Christmas wreath! A wreath is an assortment of flowers, leaves, fruits, twigs or various materials that is constructed to resemble a ring. In 1839, Lutheran priest Johann Hinrich Wichern used a wreath made from a cart wheel to educate children about the meaning and purpose of Christmas, as well as to help them count its approach, thus giving rise to the modern version of the Advent wreath. They are usually made from or to look like evergreens and symbolize strength, as evergreens last even throughout the harshest winters. 3. That's a gingerbread cookie! The gingerbread man has become synonymous with Christmas. Cookies have been around a long time (they probably originated as drops of grain paste spilled on hot rocks around a fire), but they became associated with Christmas in Europe in the 1500s. Gingerbread was a similar food, but laws restricted its baking to professional bakers; however, at the holidays these regulations were relaxed and people were allowed to bake their own at home, making a very special once a year treat. Gingerbread originated in the Crusades — a series of religious wars between the 11th and 16th centuries — and was originally made using bread crumbs, boiled with honey and seasoned heavily with spices. It was pressed onto cookie boards (carved slabs of wood with religious designs) and dried. Gingerbread evolved to become more secular and to use more modern ingredients. Eventually it became associated with Christmas when *speculaas* (gingerbread cookies) were made into animal and people shapes and used as holiday decorations.

THIRD ROW, LEFT to RIGHT: 1. That's a pickle ornament! When Czech immigrants arrived in their new country, they settled in and around other immigrant populations. Customs and traditions were shared and new traditions adopted, including the German idea of a Christmas Pickle being placed on the tree on the night before Christmas. On Christmas morning, the first child to find the pickle on the tree would receive an extra present. 2. That's a Christmas gift! Christianity considers the birth, death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus to be the greatest gift to humankind. While many people believe that the act of giving gifts during Christmas became a tradition due to the biblical story about how the three wise men brought gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense to the baby Jesus, these gifts were not the first winter gifts given. Gift giving during the winter is an ancient tradition that can be traced to winter-solstice celebrations which took place long before the famous birth occurred. During the ancient ceremonies of Saturnalia, which were celebrated for seven days beginning on December 17, Romans believed that their generosity of trading gifts would bring them good fortune in the coming year. 3. That's SPJST! A Texas tradition since 1897! For 120 years, the SPJST has worked to meet the life insurance needs of its members and its fraternal commitment to the communities where SPJST members live, work and play. We're a fraternal benefit society that members can join for any number of reasons.

SPJST is a package deal built upon the idea of addressing human needs —
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A Wide Range of Life Insurance Products, Annuities and IRAs

A Fantastic Statewide Youth and Summer Camp Program

Competitive Scholarship Program. More than 70 scholarships awarded statewide in 2016!

Mortgage Loans to Those Who Qualify

101 Local SPJST Lodges Statewide, Activities and Social Events

Volunteer Projects That Make a Positive Difference in the Lives of Our Members and the Communities We Serve

Initiatives That Promote Czech Heritage and American Patriotism

For membership information, please call us at 800.727.7578. Home Office at 520 North Main; Temple, Texas.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
Veselé Vánoce a šťastný Nový Rok!