

Community Comment 12/24/2012 – Jon Sapper

This is Jon Sapper for Community Comment.

Every December 24th, millions of children around the world are visited by a short fat guy in a red suit. He is known as Santa Claus, Kris Kringle, Old St. Nick....But where did he come from? Why does he do it? How does he do it? You know, delivering several million packages in one night is no small feat!

You see, in the beginning, St. Nicolas lived in Southwestern Turkey around the 4th century. He was a bishop in the church and was credited with doing miracles with children and sailors. He became a patron saint and was given his own feast day, Dec. 6th. About that same time, Pope Julius the 1st decided to establish a date for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. As the specific date for Christ's birth was not known, the Pope decided to declare Dec. 25th for the Holiday. This date was also selected to counter a mid-winter pagan holiday with the Christmas message.

Eventually, St. Nick's Feast became associated with Dec. 25th, probably wanting to combine the two dates so they didn't have to go to so many Christmas parties. I'll bet it was tough to find enough parking for all of those chariots.

But during the Reformation in Europe in the middle ages, the popularity of St. Nick dropped in most countries, except Holland, where he was called Sinter Claus. Years later in America, his name became Santa Claus.

In 1822, Clement Moore, a professor of biblical languages, wrote a poem...A Visit from St. Nickolas, showing Santa with a sleigh, drawn by eight reindeer. Santa flies from house to house, lands on the roof and after coming down the chimney, he leaves gifts for the children. He's pretty quiet when he does this so as not to wake up the children or adults.

Moore wrote that poem for his family, but in 1823 it was published in the local paper. It became very popular and has been reprinted countless times under a more familiar name to us.....The Night Before Christmas.

So tonight, the night before Christmas, when I go to bed, I'm making sure I am ready for Santa's visit. I will leave out some cookies and milk. I'll write a nice note thanking him for all that he does for children throughout the world. And when I hear the reindeer on the roof, I'm not getting up to look. I don't want to scare them away. I love getting the gifts that he leaves.

Merry Christmas everyone.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.