

# St Nicholas News



A communication channel to keep in touch with St Nicholas' Friends around the world

From Fr. Gerardo Cioffari, o.p. Director of the

20

June 10, 2011

CENTRO STUDI NICOLAIANI / BARI

## ANCIENT EASTERN TEXTS ON ST NICHOLAS THE ETHIOPIAN LIFE

Ethiopic Synaxarion, month of Tahschasch, ed. French transl. by Sylvain Grébaud. IV. *Patrologia Orientalis*, XV, Paris 1927

Here it is the English translation of the **Life of St Nicholas** as narrated in the short and in the wider popular **Synaxarion (Lives of Saints according the day of the Calendar) of the Ethiopians.**

The Ethiopian Church is a branch of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt that separated itself from the Byzantine and Roman Churches when the Chalcedonian Council (451) confessed in Christ two natures. This Monophysite Church has a strong feeling of the age of martyrs (till the persecution of Diocletian).



Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenuda III  
(Egypt, February 2000).

Interesting news we find in the ancient **short recension** (XII-XIV century):

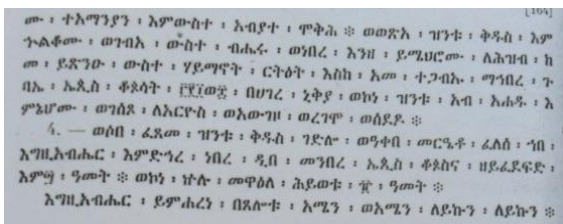
1. — ወበዛቲ፡ ዕለት፡ ካዕበ፡ አዕረፈ፡ አብ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ጻድቅ፡ ኒቆላዎስ፡ ኤጲስ፡ ቆቆስ፡ በቡትርንግራው፡ መዋኤ፡ ኤገብ ።  
2. — ዝነገቱ፡ አብ፡ ጻድቅ፡ ወቅዱስ፡ ኮነ፡ ኤምሰብኤ፡ ሀገረ፡ ማራ፡ ወስሙ፡ ለአቡው፡ ኤጲፋንዮስ፡ ወስማ፡ ለእሙ፡ ዮና፡ ወእሉ፡ ኮነ፡ ብዑላነ፡ በሀገረ፡ ማራ፡ ወኮነ፡ ፈራሀያነ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ፈደፋደ፡ ወኢኮነ፡ ሎሙ፡ ወልደ፡ ወኮነ፡ በሐዘን፡ ።

**1-In this day died** the saint and righteous Father Nicholas (Niqolāos), bishop. His name means winner-people. **2- This righteous** and saint Father belonged to the people of Myra. His father was named Epifanyos, his mother Yona. They were rich citizens of Myra, who lived in the fear of God.

ዓቢይ፡ በእንተዝ፡ ወኮነ፡ ወትረ፡ ይጸልዩ፡ ወያስተብቅዑ፡ ኅብ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ከመ፡ የሀበሙ፡ ወልደ፡ ወያትፈሥሐ፡ ቦቱ፡ ወያረከ፡ ብዕሎሙ፡ ወኮነ፡ ከመዝ፡ በእንበለ፡ ወልደ፡ እስከ፡ ልሀቱ፡ ወኃለፈ፡ ኤምረሆሙ፡ ገዜ፡ ልደት፡ ወቀብኤ፡ ኤምራሚራው፡ ወልደ ።  
3. — ኒቆላዎስ፡ ወያዮ፡ ወስተ፡ ቤተ፡ ሞቅሕ፡ ወኮነ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ አትረፈ፡ ከመ፡ ይኩን፡ አዕጼቀ፡ ዓቢይ፡ ወስተ፡ ዕፅ፡ ሃይማኖት ። ወነበረ፡ ወስተ፡ ቤተ፡ ሞቅሕ፡ እስከ፡ አመ፡ አጥፍኤ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ለጻድቅልጥ፡ ኅስ፡ ወአሜጥ፡ ለቄስጠንጢኖስ፡ ንጉሥ፡ ጻድቅ ። ወአውጽአሙ፡ ለኮሎ

They had no children, and because of this they were very sad. They often in their prayers asked the Lord to send the gift of a child, to enjoy of him and make him the hair of their wealth. To their old age they remained without children, and because the age to have

children was over, they had no more hope. **3- Diocletian** put Saint Nicholas in jail. But the Lord watched over him, in order to make him a large branch of the tree of faith. He remained in prison till the moment God got Diyoqletyanos out of the way, and proposed Quastantinos, the righteous emperor. Constantin liberated from prison all the confessors. Our Saint, went out of prison, being one of them.



He returned to his country and went on teaching the people to keep themselves in the orthodox faith, till the moment when it was convoked the **council of the 318 bishops in the city of Niqya**. He was one of them. He rebuked Aryos, excommunicated, cursed and expelled him. **4.** When this Saint had finished fighting and defending his people, he emigrated to the Lord, having seated on the Episcopal throne more than forty years. All the days of **his life are 80 years**. That the Lord through his prayer be merciful on us. Amen. Amen.



The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria Theodoros II and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams (febr 2009).

The **LONGER RECENSION** runs as follows:

**When St Nicholas' parents** realized that they were **sterile** and that the time of their fertility was gone, they stopped asking for children. But God on High wanted to show his generosity, and so gave them the present of child St Nicholas (Niqolâwos). The Lord made him Saint, blessed and perfect, and from the beginning revealed in him the sanctity.

**Soon after his birth he stood up** and people around could admire his remaining so for two hours. This was the sign that he would have practiced the virtue of justice. When taking milk from his mother's breast, he took it from the right breast alone, revealing in this way that all days of his life he would have drunk only from the spring of right deeds. From the first years he acted according the rules of the Apostles. That's why on **Wednesday and Friday he took milk** from his mother's breast after the ninth hour of the day.

**When he was a young man**, his parents let him be guided by a teacher. But at the same time he was learning by the schoolmaster, he was also instructed by the Holy Spirit. Within few days he learned the entire teaching and the law of the Holy Church. Ordained deacon, he made progresses in spiritual exercises. Afterwards he entered a monastery where the superior was the son of his father's brother. This Saint practiced in the monastery an ascetical life, unusual for common human beings. Because of this saintly life, **at the age of 19, he was ordained priest**.

**The Lord endowed him** by a special grace for working miracles, wonders and healing sick people. Who could describe his miracles and wonders, more numerous day after day and in every place, both during his life and after his death? It is here convenient mentioning some of them worked during his lifetime.

7. — ወውላቱክ፡ ለሰሙ፡ ነፃ፡ በሀገሩ፡ ጅብአሲ፡ ባዕል ። ወአምድ፡ ጎረ፡ ብዙ፡ ለመዋዕል፡ ኃልቅ፡ ነፍሱ፡ ንዋዩ፡ ወኮነ፡ ነጻዩ፡ ለሰሙ፡ ለፈረከበ፡ ሎቱ፡ ዘይሐሰይ፡ ሲላ፡ ዩ፡ ዕለት ። ወሀለዋሁ፡ ፱አዋልድ፡ ወልሀቃ፡ ወኃለፈ፡ ጊዜ፡ ሰብሳቦን፡ ወአያስተዋሰቦን፡ ለመኑሂ፡ ለምሰብላ፡ በእንተ፡ ንደቶን፡ ወአሕለዮ፡ ሰይጣን፡ ሕሊና፡ ርኩሰ፡ ከመ፡ ይግበር፡ ቤተ፡ ዘማውያን፡ ወያንብሮን፡ ለ፱ውሉድ፡ ውስጠቱ፡ ከመ፡ ይዘምዋ፡ በዓስብ፡ ወይርከብ፡ ሰላዮ፡ ወሲላዮ፡ አዋልዲሁ፡ ለምዘመት፡ ወከሠተ፡ ሎቱ፡ ለግዚአብሔር፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ኒቆሎስ፡ ዘሀለዩ፡ ቦቱ፡ ውላቱ፡ ብአሲ፡ ወተገሥአ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ኒቆሎስ፡ በሌሊት፡ ወነሥኦ፡ ሻዲናረ፡ ወርቅ፡ ለምንዋዩ፡ አቡሁ፡ ወቲጻረ፡ በፀርቅ፡ ወአምቅድመ፡ ዩጽባሕ፡ ጽባሕ፡ ወገረ፡ ውስተ፡ ቤቱ፡ ለውላቱ፡ ብአሲ፡ ወሶበ፡ ነቅሐ፡ ውላቱ፡ ብአሲ፡ ለምንዋሙ፡ ረከበ፡ ውላተ፡ ወርቅ፡ ወተፈሥሥሐ፡ ቦቱ፡ ዐቢዩ፡ ፍሥሐ፡ ወአስተዋሰብ፡ ለእንተ፡ ትልህቅ፡ ወለቱ፡ ወከማሁ፡ ካዕበ፡ ወገረ፡ ሎቱ፡ ሻዲናረ፡ ወርቅ፡ ጻግመ፡ ወአስተዋሰብ፡ ለካልአት፡ ወለቱ፡ ወማለል፡ ወገረ፡ ሎቱ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ሻዲናረ፡ ወርቅ፡ ወሶበ፡ ወገረ፡ ሎቱ፡ ነፃ፡ ብአሲ፡

**There was in his city a rich man.** After a while all his wealth disappeared. He became so poor that often lacked the daily food . **He had four daughters.** The years had passed and also the age for marriage was gone. He couldn't marry them to anyone because of their poverty. Then Satan inspired him with an impure thought: to organize a prostitution house by using his four daughters. With their fornication they would have gained the money and furnished the food both for the father and for themselves. But the Lord revealed to Saint Nicholas what the father intended to do.

**Saint Nicholas got up in the night,** took 100 gold dinars and closed them in a cloth. Before dawn he threw them into the house of this man. When the man awoke saw the gold. He rejoiced with great joy, and married his elder daughter. In the same way Nicholas threw 100 gold dinars, and the man married his second daughter.

[100] LE 10 TAHSCHASCH. 711  
 ንቅሐ፡ ወአነሥሐ፡ ውላተ፡ ወርቅ፡ አላ፡ ወዕለ፡ ለምቤቱ፡ ከመ፡ ዩርአይ፡ መኑ፡ ዘወገረ፡ ወርቅ ። ወሶበ፡ ወዕለ፡ ረከበ፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ኒቆሎስ፡ ወአእመረ፡ ከመ፡ ውላቱ፡ ወገረ፡ ሎቱ፡ ውላተ፡ ወርቅ፡ ፫ጊዜ ። ወሶቢሃ፡ ሰገደ፡ ሎቱ፡ ውላቱ፡ ብአሲ፡ ኃሕተ፡ አገሪሁ፡ ወገነዩ፡ ሎቱ፡ ብዙኃ፡ ወይቤሎ፡ ዕሚትከ፡ ዐቢይ፡  
 5 በመንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡ ለሰሙ፡ አድኃንከኒ፡ ለምንደተ፡ ንዋዩ፡ ወአምወዲቅ፡ ውስተ፡ ኃጢአት፡ ዘሐለዩኩ፡ ለግበር፡ ወአስተዋሰቦን፡ ለአዋልዲሁ፡ ለራብዲት፡ ወሉማልሲት ።  
 8. — ወአምዘ፡ ሰደዶመ፡ ኒቆሎስ፡ ለሰይጣናት፡ ብዙኃን፡ ለምላዕላ፡ ብዙኃን፡ ሰብላ፡ ወአምን፡ ዕፀው፡ ዘነኑ፡ ዩኃድሩ፡ ውስተቶሙ፡ ወያስከትምሙ፡ ለሰብላ ።  
 10 ወዘንቱ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ፈወሰሙ፡ ለብዙኃን፡ ድውያን፡ ወባረከ፡ ላዕል፡ ንከተት፡ ፍተታተ፡ ኅብስት፡ ወአጽገበ፡ ብዙኃን፡ ሕዝበ፡ ለምኑሁ፡ ወነሥኦ፡ ዘተርፈ፡ ለምውላቱ፡ ኅብስት፡ ወረከብም፡ ፈድሩደ፡ ለምዘ፡ ነፃ፡ ቀዳሚ ።  
 9. — ወአምቅድመ፡ ዩሠዩም፡ ጳጳስ፡ ርአዩ፡ ራአዩ፡ ዘከመ፡ መንበር፡ ዐቢይ፡

**For the third time Nicholas** threw 100 gold dinars, but at the moment he threw the money the man was awoken. Instead of picking up the money, he went out of the house to see who was the donator. When he met St Nicholas he soon understood that he had thrown the gold dinars three times. He flung himself at the Saint's feet, and giving thanks said to him: *“You will have a great reward in the heavenly Kingdom, because you saved me for the lack of money, as well as from the fall into the sin I intended to commit”*. And **he married both the third and the fourth of his daughters.**

**Afterwards St Nicholas drove out** many demons who, inhabiting people and trees, used to scare the neighborhood. He healed many sick persons. He was able, by blessing few pieces of bread, to feed many people. They took the remnant bread and could find more than they had taken.

When he was ordained bishop, **he had a vision.** There was a throne, on which there were magnificent Episcopal vestments. A man in a circle of light said to him: *“Put on you these vestments and sit on the throne”*.| And again, one night Our Lady Mary (Mâryâm) gave him the priestly vestments, while Christ, Our Lord, gave him the book of the Gospel.

**When the bishop of Myra died**, an angel of the Lord appeared to the **patriarch of the city of Rome** (Romê) revealing who was St Nicholas, his name as well as his aspect. When the patriarch awoke referred to the bishops his vision. They agreed that it was a vision from the Lord. He called St Nicholas and ordained him bishop of Myra. After few days the empire was governed by the ungodly **Diyocletyânos**.

**He worshipped idols**, and ordained that everybody had to worship the idols. Soon many faithful were put into jail. When he heard about St Nicholas, he took him, **put him into jail and for many years let him be tortured**. But our Lord Jesus Christ fortified him, gave him courage, protected him during the tortures, from which he went out safe and sound, without injury. When Diocletian was tired of torturing St Nicholas, put him into prison.


**May St Nicholas be glorified**, whose memory is celebrated in Myra, his city. People are admired by his deeds and his fellow citizens are amazed. When they saw the child on his birthday, standing up for two hours on his feet.

This Ethiopic text, that I translated from French, has arrived to us in five manuscripts:

- Paris, Abbadié 66, XV century.....
- Paris Abbadié 1 XVIII-XIX century.....
- Oxford Bodlejan XXIII, XVIII century.....
- Paris Ethiopien 126, XVIII century.....
- Paris Musée ethn.Trocadero 5 , XV century.....

NB. It seems that in Ethiopia today there are no St Nicholas Churches. About St Nicholas Churches in Africa, give a look at: [www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/gazetteer](http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/gazetteer) of our friends canon James Rosenthal and Mrs Carol Myers. Note the strong presence of Anglican St Nicholas Churches in South Africa

Egypt. Cairo.  
St Nicholas  
Greek  
Orthodox  
Cathedral  
of the  
Patriarch of  
Alexandria



About the introduction of St Nicholas cult in Africa speaks an ancient Greek text, the “*Iconia Sancti Nicolai in Africa*” (Thauma de Imagine), generally following the Greek and Latin *Lives* of the Saint. The ancientness is revealed by the use of the term *Vandals* (flourishing 430-534), instead of terms like Agarens or Saracens used after VII century.



Kenya. **Riruta** (Nairobi) A Greek Orthodox Liturgy in the Parish Church of St Nicholas. Besides another St Nicholas Church in **Kawangware** , in Nairobi there are various religious and social institutions named after St Nicholas.



**Greetings from Bari to all Orthodox Protestant, Catholic, Monophysite and Nestorian Christians.**