

St Nicholas Day celebrations set for Canterbury



St Nicholas will arrive in Canterbury on Saturday 6 December, beginning with a parade and procession at 1pm from Westgate through the High Street with music by Big Bash Music.

St Nicholas, the 'true' Father Christmas and Santa Claus, will make his way through the city in a parade organised by the Canterbury City Management Ltd. The saint will arrive at Canterbury Cathedral at 2.30pm for a programme that includes music by the Cathedral Choristers directed by Dr David Flood. Admission to the cathedral is free from 2pm. Children and adults may greet St Nicholas at the Cathedral shop from 3pm.

This is the 3rd annual celebration and record crowds are expected including coach tours and school groups.

This year's charity is to be *Demelza House*, a hospice for children in Kent. The SNS is pleased to announce that Mrs Jane Williams, who will celebrate her first Christmas with her husband Archbishop Rowan and their children in Canterbury, is the patron of the St Nicholas Celebration Day.

In the evening the cathedral will be the venue for a classic seasonal music programme for St Nicholas Day by the Cantuar Singers and Orchestra including Part One of the Christmas Oratorio of J S Bach and a new work by

Matthew Martin, with text by Dean Robert Willis, to honour the saint of the day. Tickets will be from £10 for unreserved seats. Early purchase is advised as quire seating is limited.

An exhibition of images of St Nicholas will be on display in the cathedral from 19 November - 15 December during regular visiting hours. It is a rare collection that was, until recently, housed in Old Palace, owned by Canon James Rosenthal of the St Nicholas Society.

St Nicholas

Father Christmas is as old as Europe. Once he was Woden, lashing his reindeer through the darkness of northern midwinter. Then he encountered the Church, and She transformed him into a saint, the much-loved Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (in south-west Turkey) in the fourth century. St Nicholas became the patron saint of children, and was given 6 December as his day.

Since the 6th century St Nicholas has been venerated in both East and West, though virtually nothing is known of his life. Some believe he may have been one of the fathers at the Council of Nicea (325), imprisoned during the Emperor Diocletian's persecution.

According to legend, Nicholas was an extremely generous man. He revived three schoolboys murdered by an innkeeper in a tub of pickles. He rescued three young women from prostitution by giving their poverty-stricken father three bags of gold. (Hence the use of three gold balls as the pawnbroker's signs.)