

Mommy..Daddy..Is There A Santa Claus?

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Mommy..Daddy..Is There A Santa Claus?

By Mark Bulleit

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Is there really a Santa Claus? Any parent who hasn't been faced with this question most likely will at some point. But how do you answer this? No one wants to crush a child's dreams of Santa and holiday magic.

Some kids, like me, are crushed at school when they hear from a classmate that they found all their presents under their parents' bed, thus, proving there really is no Santa. Then, reasoning sets in, which is about the time they begin to wonder why they have been told this fairy tale all this time as it was the truth.

So, is there truly a Santa Claus? Well, if you are in this position you will probably be glad to hear that the only true answer to this question is...yes, absolutely.

The name "Santa Claus" came from the Dutch "Sinter Klass" pronunciation of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was a Christian priest, who later became a bishop. He was a wealthy person, and traveled the country helping others, giving gifts of money and other presents. St. Nicholas chose to remain hidden while giving these gifts, so the children were told to go to sleep quickly or he would not come!

One famous story is about a poor man who had no money to give to his three daughters on their wedding day. St. Nicholas dropped bags of gold into the stockings which the girls had left to dry by the fire. Ever since, children have hung up stockings on Christmas Eve hoping that they will be filled with gifts by Christmas morning.

According to the Catholics, a saint is one who lived such a holy life that, after dying and going to heaven, is still able to help people on earth.

In the 1500's people in England stopped worshipping St. Nicholas and favored another gift giving figure Father Christmas.

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Now, no matter what your religious preference is or if you even believe in Saints, doesn't change that St. Nicholas represents a selfless act of giving. Rather it be material gifts, money where needed or the often most valuable gift of a little of your time, it's about the act of helping someone else for no other reason than just because they need it.

As St. Nicholas had figured out as a young man, we truly, as adults, begin to understand Santa Claus when we realize that the best gift of all is not on the receiving end, but being the one giving. And being rich doesn't always mean having a lot of money. Often, especially these days, taking the time to spend with someone, inviting them over for dinner or even putting food on their table, can make all the difference.

But how do we explain this to a child? Well, we do it in stages. They first have to learn how much receiving a gift meant to them to understand how much it means to others. And Santa Claus, well he is

a perception of a truly magical holiday spirit presented to them in a way with which they can associate at this point in their lives.

So, how do we, as parents, answer this question in a way our young children will understand? You, as a parent, should decide when it's time to come clean. You can meter this by deciding when you feel they will understand that Santa Claus really does exist in all of us and he often means something different to each person they'll meet. A child grasping this is a big step towards learning what the holidays are truly all about.

Mark Bulleit is the developer/co-founder of the popular GreetingsFromSanta.com offering personal letters from Santa. Light up your child's face like never before this season. Happy holidays from <http://www.GreetingsFromSanta.com>.

INTERNET OFFERS HOLIDAY FUN FOR FAMILY, CO-WORKERS

By Maria Heckaman

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Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, or Santa Claus, the holiday season is the perfect time for having fun with family and co-workers.

Of course, the Internet proves to be a great resource for gathering recipes, crafts, songs, and interesting tidbits about the holidays.

Santa's Net and The Kids Domain are two of the best holiday Internet sites, both offering information for many beliefs.

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Do you know what year the British Parliament officially abolished the celebration of Christmas? What about the date and location of the first printed reference to a Christmas Tree? How do you say "Merry Christmas" in Bohemian, Yoruba, and Chinese?

Santa's Net can help you find the answers to such questions, while filling you up with many more holiday facts and myths.

On its home page, visitors can countdown to Christmas and choose from many categories to browse, including carols and songs, Christmas traditions from other countries, recipes, toys, Christmas movies, bookmarks, and more.

Keeping with its world-holiday theme, the site also has posted recipes such as Amaretti from Italy, Billy Can Pudding from Australia, Christmas Lebkuchen from Egypt, and Kourabiethes from Greece.

The Kids Domain may sound like a place, well, just for kids, but the whole family can find something fun and interesting at the site.

It offers gift-making ideas, electronic greeting cards, crafts, games to download, holiday clipart, recipes, book suggestions for parents, music, stories and world traditions.

The site includes holiday variations for several countries and/or beliefs such as Kwanzaa and Ramadan. There also is the Grownups Place for parents.

Children have the opportunity to send Santa Claus a letter, provided in an easy-to-use form.

Other sites that offer letters to Santa are The North Pole's Christmas Mission, Claus.com, Santa at Home, Dear Santa Claus, Santa Claus Online, and The Christmas Pages.

Finally, children of all ages can track Santa Claus' travels on Christmas Eve at www.noradsanta.org.

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