

St Patrick c 390 – 461 17th March

Although closely associated with Ireland, Patrick was born in the north of Britain to a Christian family. He was captured by Irish pirates and worked as a slave for six years before escaping and managing to make his way back to his family and begin training for the priesthood, although his education was limited. Finally in 435 he made his way back to the north of Ireland, basing himself at Armagh and making missionary journeys from there.

Fortunately his own writings survive; an autobiography (*Confessio*), a letter protesting the slave trade, and probably also the "Breastplate", a prayer for protection. The "Breastplate" is often known by its opening words; in English "I bind unto myself today". It is referred to as a *lorica*- literally "armour" prayer – **Ephesians 6 13** *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness.*

Patrick's writings reveal deep concern for his flock, and a determination to fight against paganism and idolatry at all levels, together with a willingness to suffer for the Gospel. Patrick, his adopted name (he was originally Maewyn Succat) means "the fatherly one". He has come to not only represent the many missionaries to Ireland, but has been credited with semi-magical powers inconsistent with his own humility and practicality. Similarly a number of items have come to be associated with him which actually belong to later dates.

In art he is always shown as a Bishop, again in the vestments typical of much later practices. In relatively recent images he holds a shamrock, alluding to the legend that he used the three lobes of the clover leaf to try to teach about the Trinity.



Contemporary window
by Mark Bleakley,
Tennessee



All Saints Episcopal Church
San Francisco
? early 20^t

Although he is now associated with the colour green as in the windows below from St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne created by the English firm of Hardmann and Co around 1868, the earliest depictions regularly show him in blue, as in the painted initial from *La Vie des Sains* (c 1225 -1250, a manuscript once owned by Henry VII). Green was adopted as "the" Irish colour only from 1641.



Image ©The British Library Board



St Cyril of Jerusalem (c 315-386) 18th March

St Cyril's life was complicated by ongoing controversies over Arianism. He was born in Jerusalem, and was Bishop for around 35 years, but spent about 16 years in exile from the city following conflict with the Metropolitan (bishop of a Province) of Caesarea into which other Bishops and even the Emperor were dragged.

Interestingly, one of the charges against him was selling valuable church vestments to provide for the poor. However, although his orthodoxy was questioned he participated in the Council of Constantinople (381) and agreed to its conclusions on the Creed.

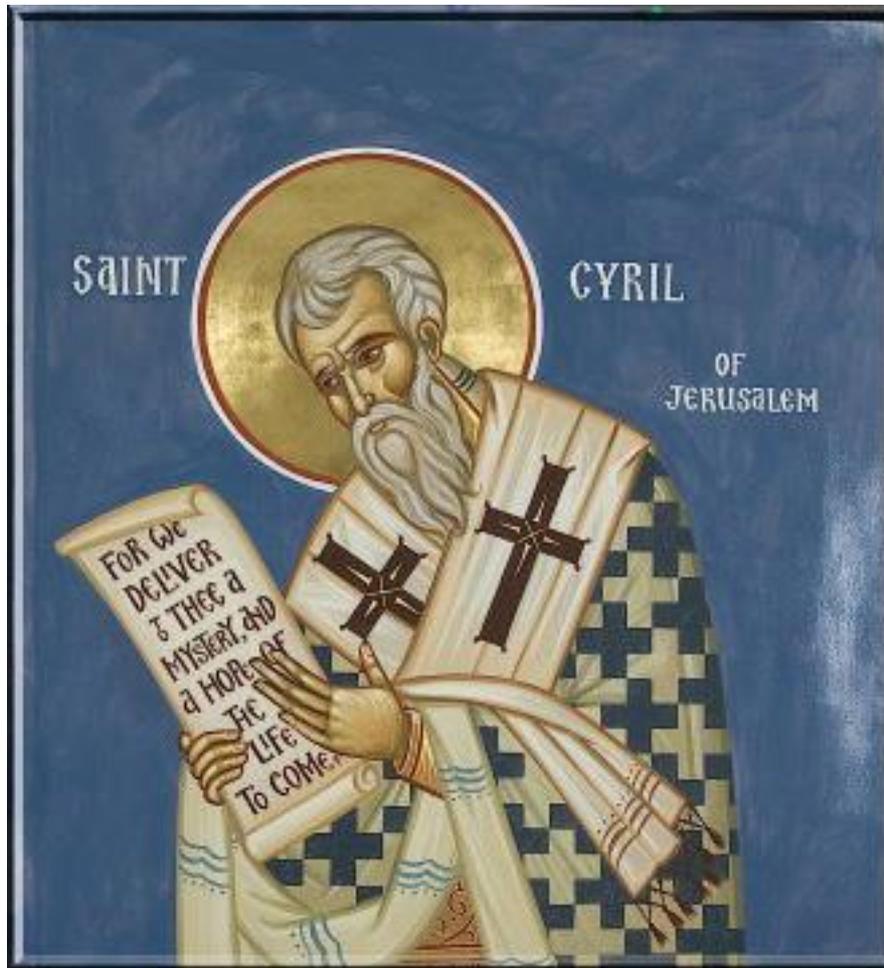
He is named as a Doctor of the Church on the basis of the instructions he wrote for catechumens (those preparing for Baptism and the newly baptized.) Despite his own trials these discourses stress forgiveness, and above all the love and kindness of God and the healing power of the Spirit, unusual in a time when judgement and punishment were often emphasised.

The Spirit comes gently and makes himself known by his fragrance. He is not felt as a burden for God is light, very light. Rays of light and knowledge stream before him as the Spirit approaches. The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen and to console.

Icons of St Cyril often show him holding either a book, or a scroll with words from 1 Corinthians 15: 51

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep...

This is in keeping with the strong eschatological orientation of his time



St Joseph, husband of Mary,

19th March

While Joseph, a descendant of King David, is generally represented in paintings of the birth of Jesus – usually as an old man, it having been assumed, for example in the *Protoevangelium of James* (2nd C) that he died before Jesus' death – other aspects of his presence are seldom shown in art, again with the exception of the family trip to Jerusalem, when Jesus remains behind in the Temple, to the distress of his parents when they discover him missing.

In Matthew's Gospel Joseph is recorded as having been given guidance from God in four dreams.

Matthew 1 18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 2. 13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod.

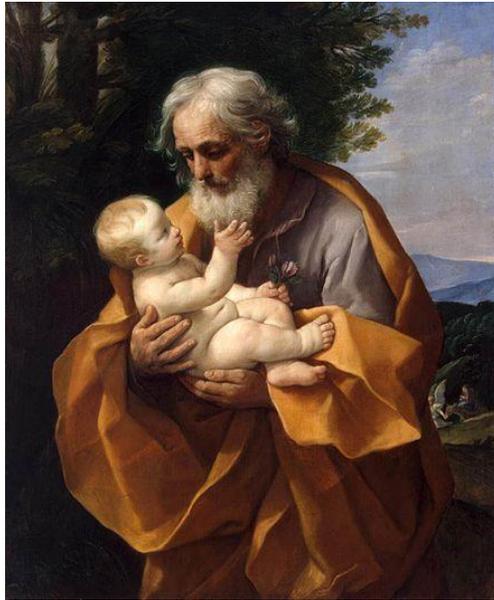
19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

These dreams are rarely represented in art, but have been memorably imaged by Georges de la Tour (c 1630) whose use of material light sources to suggest spiritual illumination is unequalled.



Although his feast day was certainly being celebrated in the West by about 1100, it was only in the 16th c, particularly through the Carmelites, including Teresa of Avila, that it became a major celebration. We then begin to have tender images of Joseph as a loving father, as in the 1635 painting by Guido Reni below.



A text "*History of Joseph as a Carpenter*" (a 7th c compilation ultimately based simply on Matthew 13:55 which asks of Jesus *Is not this the carpenter's son?* - where the word translated carpenter can equally apply to various types of craft skills or even to being "learned") - also became popular in the 17th c, ultimately leading to the feast of Joseph the Worker on 1st May being proclaimed in 1955. de la Tour painted, probably around 1645 *Joseph in the Carpenter's Shop* with the child Jesus emanating light in another night scene.



St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne c 634 -687

20th March

Cuthbert was from an Anglo-Saxon family, and became a monk at Melrose Abbey in 651, apparently after a vision of St Aidan on the night the older saint died. Cuthbert became prior there about 10 years later. From this base he undertook numerous missionary journeys. After the Synod of Whitby (663/4) which voted in favour of using Roman customs and dating rather than Celtic he became prior of Lindisfarne and gradually by gentle patience won the monks to the new systems. He was drawn to solitude, and spent some time living on the little St Cuthbert's Island and then withdrew to Inner Farne, where Aidan used to spend Lent. Contemporary accounts give a sense of his great charm and ability, and he was revered for his gifts of discernment and teaching.

Cuthbert died on 20 March 687 and was buried at Lindisfarne where a special shrine was built. When the Danes invaded in 875 a group of monks carried his remains to various sites in the North, eventually reaching Durham in 995 where, exceptionally, they still are.

A recent sculpture by Fenwick Lawson *The Journey* commemorates the long wanderings of the monks.



Durham became the most important site for pilgrimage in the North.

A beautiful mss now in Oxford is the first fully illustrated Life of a saint to be produced in England, picturing episodes to accompany Bede's Life of Cuthbert.

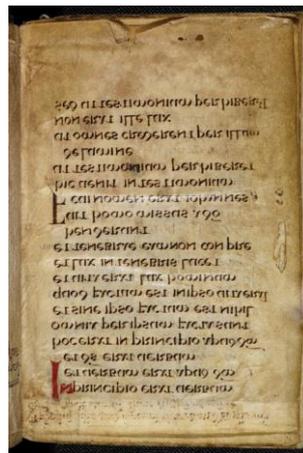
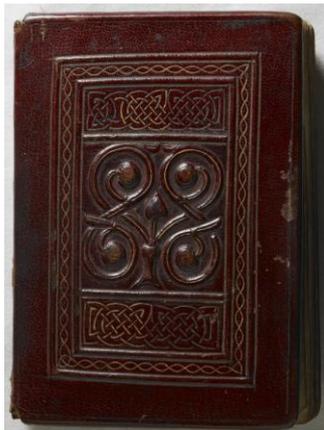


"Of the habitation which he made for himself in the Island of Farne, when he had expelled the devils." © The Master and Fellows of University College, Oxford



"Of his manner of life in his bishopric." © The Master and Fellows of University College, Oxford

When the shrine was opened in 1828 the body was replaced, but items buried with it were removed to the monastic buildings. Already in 1104 a Gospel of St John in a tooled leather binding had been removed and important visitors were allowed to place it in a bag around their necks. The British Library purchased it from the Jesuits in 2012. it has been described as "one of the world's most significant books".



The tiny (138 by 92 millimetres (5.4 in × 3.6 in) book was probably placed in the coffin a few years after Cuthbert's death



Inner Farne Islands. Cuthbert is recorded as loving animals, especially birds. These islands are now preserved as bird sanctuaries