

March

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St. Patrick

It is believed that St. Patrick was born in fifth-century Britain to Roman parents. When he was sixteen, he was captured by pirates and taken to Ireland. There he was sold as a slave. His owner sent him to tend his flocks on the mountains. Patrick had little food and clothing. Yet he took good care of the animals in rain, snow and ice. Patrick was so lonely on the hillside that he turned often in prayer to Jesus and his Mother Mary. His life was hard and unfair. However, Patrick's trust in God grew stronger all the time.

Later when he escaped from Ireland, he studied to become a priest. But Patrick always felt that he had to go back to Ireland to bring that pagan land to Christ. At last his wish came true. He became a priest and then a bishop. It was while St. Celestine I was pope that Patrick went back to Ireland. How happy he was to bring the Good News of the true God to the people who once had held him a slave.

Right from the start, Patrick suffered much. His relatives and friends wanted him to quit before the pagan Irish killed him. Yet the saint kept on preaching about Jesus. He traveled from one village to another. He seldom rested, and he performed great penances for those people whom he so loved. Before he died, the whole nation was Christian.

Despite such great success, Patrick never grew proud. He called himself a poor sinner and gave all the praises to God. Patrick died in 461.

Many missionaries are laboring today to bring the Good News to our world just as Patrick did. We can pray and make sacrifices that their hard work will lead many people to belief in and love for Jesus.

Quitting Time

Have you ever set out to do something that you thought was really important, and people wanted you to quit? What was it like? What would have happened if you quit? Did you or didn't you quit? What would have happened if Patrick had quit?

Shamrocks

St. Patrick is said to have explained the Most Holy Trinity to the Irish by using a shamrock. The three leaves represent the three distinct persons of the Trinity. The one plant represents the one God. So the shamrock is a symbol of the three persons in one God. Using green construction paper, cut out shamrocks and decorate your classroom or home with them.

Prayer

Re-read the story of St. Patrick and write a prayer to ask his help. Notice his childhood and how he must understand what it means to be lonely, left out, grounded, frustrated, eager to follow his life's dreams.... Do you have a special problem you need help with?

March 19--St. Joseph

St. Joseph is a great saint. He was Jesus' foster-father and Mary's husband. Joseph was given the great privilege of taking care of God's own Son, Jesus, and his Mother, Mary. Joseph was poor all his life. He had to work very hard in his carpenter shop, but he didn't mind. He was happy to work for his little family. He loved Jesus and Mary so much.

Whatever the Lord wanted him to do, St. Joseph did at once, no matter how difficult it was. He was humble and pure, gentle and wise. Jesus and Mary loved him and obeyed him because God had placed him as the head of their family. What a joy for St. Joseph to live with the Son of God himself. Jesus obeyed him, helped him, and loved him.

We pray to St. Joseph as the protector of the dying for a special reason. It is believed that Joseph died peacefully in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

St. Teresa of Avila chose St. Joseph as the protector of her order of Carmelite sisters. She had a great trust in his prayers. "Every time I ask St. Joseph for something," she used to say, "he always obtains it for me."

Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph the patron of the Universal Church.

As Jesus obeyed and helped St. Joseph in his hard and humble work, let us, too, willingly help our parents with the work to be done at home.

Imagine

In the space below write what you image St. Joseph must have been like. Here are some ideas: Picture St. Joseph in the carpenter shop. How is he dressed? How does he feel when he is teaching Jesus how to saw wood? How did he feel about his work? Did he like being the head of the Holy Family? Did he pray?

Prayer for the Dying

Draw a picture of St. Joseph dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Under the picture write this prayer: "Oh, St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus Christ and husband of Mary, pray for us and for the dying of this day."

March 25--The Annunciation of the Lord

The time arrived for Jesus to come and save mankind. God sent the Archangel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth where Mary lived. The glorious archangel entered Mary's little house and found her praying.

"Hail Mary, full of grace!" said the angel. "The Lord is with you, and you are blessed among women." Mary was surprised to hear the angel's words of praise.

"Do not be afraid, Mary," said Gabriel. Then he told her that she was to be the mother of Jesus, our Savior. Mary understood what a great honor God was giving her. Yet she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" At that very moment, she became the Mother of God. And still she called herself his handmaid, his servant.

Mary knew, too, that as the mother of Jesus, she would have many sorrows. She knew she would have to suffer when her Son suffered. Yet with all her heart, she said, "Be it done to me according to your word."

The Hail Mary

There is a special prayer to Mary that recalls the words of the angel Gabriel. You can say it every day:

Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Role-playing

Characters:

angel

Mary

From a children's Bible read the story of the Annunciation from the first chapter of Luke and let the children act out the parts as they are read.

Yes

Have you ever felt that God was asking you to do something for him? What did you say to him. Tell about it here.

Reflecting Mary's Obedience

Draw a picture showing how happy Mary must have been after the angel came to her.