

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MARCH WORSHIP CALENDAR

March 3 - John and Charles Wesley - Renewers of the Church

The Wesley brothers, John born in 1703 and Charles in 1707, were leaders of the evangelical revival in the Church of England in the eighteenth century. They both attended Oxford University, and there they gathered a few friends with whom they undertook a strict adherence to the worship and discipline of the Book of Common Prayer, from which strict observance they received the nickname, "Methodists." Having been ordained, they went to the American colony of Georgia in 1735, John as a missionary and Charles as secretary to Governor Oglethorpe. They found the experience disheartening, and returned home in a few years. There, three days apart, they underwent a conversion experience. John, present with a group of Moravians who were reading Martin Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, received a strong emotional awareness of the love of Christ displayed in freely forgiving his sins and granting him eternal life.

Following this experience, John and Charles, with others, set about to stir up in others a like awareness of and response to the saving love of God. Of the two, John was the more powerful preacher, and averaged 8000 miles of travel a year, mostly on horseback. At the time of his death he was probably the best known and best loved man in England.

Charles Wesley was a great hymn writer, writing over 6000 hymns including over 600 on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Many are still favorites to this day, such as; Christ the Lord is risen today, Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire, Come, thou long expected Jesus, Hark, the herald angels sing, Lo, He comes with clouds descending, Love Divine, all loves excelling, and Oh for a thousand tongues to sing

March 17 - Patrick, Bishop and Missionary of Ireland.

Patrick was born about 390, in southwest Britain, somewhere between the Severn and the Clyde rivers, son of a deacon and grandson of a priest. When about sixteen years old, he was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. Until this time, he had, by his own account, cared nothing for God, but now he turned to God for help. After six years, he either escaped or was freed, made his way to a port 200 miles away, and there persuaded some sailors to take him onto their ship. He returned to his family much changed, and began to prepare for the priesthood, and to study the Bible.

Around 435, Patrick was commissioned, perhaps by bishops in Gaul and perhaps by the Pope, to go to Ireland as a bishop and missionary. Four years earlier another bishop, Palladius, had gone to Ireland to preach, but he was no longer there. Patrick made his headquarters at Armagh in the North, where he built a school, and had the protection of the local monarch. From this base he made extensive missionary journeys, with considerable success. To say that he single-handedly turned Ireland from a pagan to a Christian country is an exaggeration, but is not far from the truth.

Almost everything we know about him comes from his own writings, available in English in the *Ancient Christian Writers* series.

March 19 St. Joseph –

All that we know of Joseph we learn from the first two chapters of Matthew and of Luke. Otherwise he is mentioned only in passing in Luke 3:23; John 1:45; John 6:42 as the supposed father of Jesus. (Mark does not mention him at all.)

In the face of circumstances where a man of lesser character might have reacted very differently, Joseph graciously assumed the role of Jesus' father. He is well remembered in Christian tradition for the love he showed to the boy Jesus, and for his tender affection and care for Mary, during the twelve years and more that he was their protector.

March 24 - Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, and the Martyrs of El Salvador

Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez (August 15, 1917 – March 24, 1980), commonly known as Monseñor Romero, was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador. He later became prelate archbishop of San Salvador.

As an archbishop, he witnessed numerous violations of human rights and began a ministry speaking out on behalf of the poor and victims of the country's civil war. His brand of political activism was denounced by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and the government of El Salvador. In 1980, he was assassinated by gunshot while consecrating the Eucharist during mass. His death finally provoked international outcry for human rights reform in El Salvador.

In 1997, a cause for beatification and canonization into sainthood was opened for Romero and Pope John Paul II bestowed upon him the title of Servant of God. The process continues. He is considered the unofficial patron saint of the Americas and El Salvador and is often referred to as "San Romero" in El Salvador. Outside of Catholicism Romero is honored by other religious denominations of Christendom, like the Church of England through its Common Worship. He is one of the ten 20th-century martyrs from across the world who are depicted in statues above the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey, London.

March 25 – The Annunciation

In the first chapter of Luke we read how the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Christ, and how Mary answered, "Here I am, the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me as you have said." It is reasonable to suppose that Our Lord was conceived immediately after this. Accordingly, since we celebrate His birth on 25 December, we celebrate the Annunciation nine months earlier, on 25 March. For many centuries most European countries took 25 March, not 1 January, as the day when the number of the year changed, so that 24 March 1201 was followed by 25 March 1202. If you had asked a Christian of that time why the calendar year changed so awkwardly partway through a month, he would have answered: "Today we begin a new year of the Christian era, the era which began X years ago today when God was made man, when He took upon Himself a fleshly body and human nature in the womb of the Virgin."

March 29- Monday in Holy Week

March 30- Tuesday in Holy Week

March 31- Wednesday in Holy Week