

SAINTS OF MARCH: A SELECTION

March 4: St. Casimir , Confessor (15th century).

The patron saint of Poland (and Lithuania), Casimir was known for his piety, his integrity, and his humility (not virtues ordinarily associated with the ruling classes, especially in those times). He was elected King of Hungary during a struggle for the throne, but when there was achieved a reconciliation between the people and their original ruler, Casimir simply renounced any claim on the throne. He was only 26 when he died, but he was canonized less than 40 years later.

March 7: Ss. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs (3rd century).

The story of their imprisonment and martyrdom is one of the great works of Christian literature from the period before Constantine. It was written by Perpetua herself, and finished by an eye-witness (possibly the theologian Tertullian), and it recounts the sufferings of these two young women, arrested for the Faith. Perpetua, at age 22, was a new mother—she was allowed to have her baby son in the prison with her. Felicity was a slave and was pregnant—she gave birth (prematurely) while in the prison. They and several others were baptized in prison (please note: they were unbaptized catechumens, yet they could not reject their love of Christ, and so they were sentenced to death).

March 17: St. Patrick, bishop (5th century).

Patrick's story is so often told, and Irish parades are so often celebrated (especially in cities like New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Savannah...) that it is easy to forget he was actually a Briton (probably from Wales). He chose to go to Ireland to convert the people who had, years before, kidnapped him and brought him to their island. It is noteworthy that Ireland is the one land to which Christianity was brought by missionaries without any martyrdom taking place!

March 18: St. Cyril of Jerusalem , bishop and Doctor of the Church (4th century).

A great defender of the full divinity of Jesus as Son of God, Cyril is in many ways more important for the series of catechetical lectures he gave to new converts, just after their baptism, to explain the Faith more fully. He gives us a wonderful window into the liturgical life of the Church in Jerusalem once Constantine legalized the Faith. He gives us great insights into the belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the proper way to receive that Sacrament, as well as solid instruction in Christian living.

March 19: St. Joseph (1st century).

As the adoptive father of Jesus, Joseph is the unsung linchpin holding together the Holy Family. His hallmarks surely are humility in accepting the will of God in his life (being engaged to a pregnant fiancée was surely not part of his plan), and the image of dignified hard work as a carpenter (a title given also to Jesus). Did Joseph die before Jesus began His public ministry? Probably. But Joseph is now regarded as the patron of the Universal Church, consecrated to extending that public ministry throughout the world.