



High Days and Holy Days for November 2020

(from Parish Pump, UK, November 2020)

High Days and Holy Days for November

Editor: As Saints' Days do not change from year to year, material on many of these days has been offered before. Those with an asterisk are new this year.

- 1 All Saints' Day
- 1 The first martyrs
- 2 All Souls' Day
- 3 Hubert
- 4 Charles Borromeo - saint for those with a lay ministry
- 5 Guy Fawkes' night
- 5 Kea
- 6 William Temple - Archbishop of Canterbury
- 6 Illtud
- 6 The Martyrs of Vietnam d. 1745 – 1862
- 7 Willibrord of York – apostle of Frisia (658 - 739)
- 8 Four Crowned Martyrs
- 10 Leo the Great
- 10 Justus – leading the Church in troubling times
- 11 Martin of Tours
- 13 Frances Xavier Cabrini - New York's first saint
- 17 Gregory of Tours
- 18 Elizabeth of Hungary
- *NEW 19 Hilda - Abbess of Whitby**
- 22 Cecelia - patron saint of musicians
- 25 Catherine of Alexandria
- 30 Andrew
- 30 Andrew – a different look

**

1st November: All Saints' Day – the feast day of all the redeemed

All Saints, or All Hallows, is the feast of all the redeemed, known and unknown, who are now in heaven. When the English Reformation took place, the number of saints in the calendar was drastically reduced, with the result that All Saints' Day stood out with a prominence that it had never had before.

This feast day first began in the East, perhaps as early as the 5th century, as commemorating 'the martyrs of the whole world'. A Northern English 9th century calendar named All Hallows as a principal feast, and such it has remained. Down the centuries devotional writers have seen in it the fulfilment of Pentecost and indeed of Christ's redemptive sacrifice and resurrection.

The saints do not belong to any religious tradition, and their lives and witness to Christ can be appreciated by all Christians. Richard Baxter, writing in the 17th century, wrote the following:

He wants not friends that hath thy love,
And made converse and walk with thee,

And with thy saints here and above,
With whom for ever I must be...

As for my friends, they are not lost;
The several vessels of thy fleet,
Though parted now, by tempests tost,
Shall safely in thy haven meet...

The heavenly hosts, world without end,
Shall be my company above;
And thou, my best and surest Friend,
Who shall divide me from thy love?*

1,255 ancient English churches were dedicated to All Saints - a number only surpassed by those dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

**(Maurice Frost (ed.), Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern (London: Clowes, 1962), no. 274, verses 1,3,6.*

**

Of course, very many of the early 'saints' were also martyrs, and so...

1st November: The first martyrs – the 'seed' of the Christian Church

The first martyrs of Rome are recorded in the old Roman Martyrology, which states that:

'At Rome, the birthday is celebrated of very many martyrs, who under the Emperor Nero were falsely charged with the burning of the city and by him were ordered to be slain by various kinds of cruel death; some were covered with the skin of wild beasts, and cast to the dogs to be torn asunder; others were crucified, and then when daylight failed used as torches to illuminate the night. All these were disciples of the apostles and the first fruits of the martyrs whom the Holy Roman Church sent to their Lord before the apostles' death.'

**

2nd November: All Souls' Day – a time of reckoning with the past

The early Church was slow to dedicate a liturgical day to offering prayers and masses to commemorate the faithful departed. But in time prayers were offered on behalf of dead monks, that they might attain 'the Beatific Vision' through purification, which the Church later described as Purgatory. Odilo, the powerful abbot of Cluny, (d 1049) decreed that All Souls' Day should follow the feast of All Saints' Day.

At least four ancient English dedications are known, the most famous of which are All Souls College, Oxford and the church in Langham Place in London.

In bygone centuries All Souls' Day was certainly uncomfortable for anyone who had wronged a person who had then died. For it was believed that souls in purgatory could appear on earth on this day, in the form of ghosts, witches or toads, to haunt anyone who had wronged them in life.

On a more cheerful note, it was also believed that you could help the dead on this day by almsgiving in cash or in kind. Some of these beliefs seem to have been caught up in the popular customs of Hallowe'en.

When the Reformation came, the Protestants disregarded the idea of Purgatory, and this feast day remained with the Roman Catholic Church.

**

3rd November: Hubert and the stag

The morality of hunting has made the headlines in recent years, but here at least was one man who was converted while hunting. Hubert (bishop, d 727 AD) was out on Good Friday hunting stag when he came across a stag with a crucifix between its antlers. This so shook him that he converted to Christianity, and then went on to become Bishop of Tongres-Maestricht. History does not tell us if he killed the stag or not, or if he ever hunted stag again.

**

4th November: Charles Borromeo - the un-ordained archbishop

Why should being a 'lay' person stop you from as full a ministry as being ordained? Here is a saint for all lay people who suspect they can do as good a job....

Charles Borromeo was an Italian who lived in Milan from 1538 to 1584. His uncle, Pope Pius IV, made him Archbishop of Milan three years before Charles even became a priest, let alone a bishop. Charles, however, was one of the ablest and most compassionate Christian leaders of his age. He established theological colleges to train future clergy, encouraged children to be taught the Christian faith, and increased the help given to the poor.

**

5th November: Guy Fawkes - an early terrorist

Back in 1605 Guy Fawkes managed to stow a good few barrels of gunpowder under the House of Lords without anybody noticing. He was part of a Roman Catholic plot to murder James 1 of England and his parliament at the state opening. Fortunately, Guy Fawkes was found - and stopped - in time.

**

5th November: The Kea to toothache?

Kea was an early Christian and a monk from a good family who left Glastonbury to work in Devon and Cornwall, where Landkey (Devon) and Kea (Cornwall) bear his name. He founded several Christian centres in the area before going on to Brittany to become the saint known there as 'Saint-Quay'. It seems that Kea may also have tried a bit of early dentistry, as down the centuries since he has been invoked over the problems of toothaches.

**

6th November: William Temple - Archbishop of Canterbury

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill was Britain's Prime Minister. At the same time, William Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury. While Churchill led the country against Germany, Temple encouraged the British people to trust the Lord for their deliverance and strength. Like Churchill, Temple was a great leader, a gifted orator and a prolific writer. He was also a theologian and social activist.

Temple was born on 15th October 1881 in Exeter, Devon. He was educated at Rugby School and Balliol College, Oxford, from 1900 to 1904. He loved the music of Bach; the poetry of Browning and Shelley, and Shakespeare. He was an avid reader and possessed a near-photographic memory.

He became president of the Oxford Union and after graduation, was a lecturer in philosophy at Queen's College, Oxford. He was a member of the debating society and was a skilled and balanced debater. Following his ordination in 1909, and priesting in 1910, Temple was headmaster of Repton School for four years. He married Frances Anson in 1916. They were childless.

From 1921-29 Temple was Bishop of Manchester. During this time he was seen as a pioneer of the Ecumenical Movement and gradually became a national figure. In 1926 he urged the British government to seek a negotiated agreement to the General Strike.

Temple excelled as a moderator; a teacher and a preacher and his appointment as Archbishop of York (1929-40) was a popular one. His influence also led to the formation of the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. During the 2nd World War he jointly founded the Council of Christians and Jews to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice in Britain.

As Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-44) Temple became an outspoken advocate of social reform and became involved in the campaign against unemployment, poverty and poor housing. He believed in the rights of all people, whether rich or poor, and was a leading force for social justice. He was grounded in the problems of the working man and in his book *Christianity and Social Order* (1942) he shared his vision for all to have access to healthcare, education and decent housing. His radical thinking and activism played a foundational role in the formation of the British Welfare State.

Temple died aged 63 at Westgate-on-Sea, Kent on 26th October 1944. He was the first Primate of All England to be cremated and his ashes were buried in the cloister garden of Canterbury Cathedral. He is the last Archbishop of Canterbury to have died while in office.

**

6th November: Illtud - patron saint of NGOs?

Not many people have heard of Illtud, but perhaps we should make him the patron saint of all Christian NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) who work in emergency and famine relief.

Illtud did not set out to be an action hero – he was a gentle and learned abbot heading up a monastery in Glamorgan. Illtud spent his days reading the Scriptures and philosophy. Yet the year that famine struck the coast of Brittany, Illtud put down his parchments and became a man of action.

Illtud issued what must have been one of the earliest ‘emergency relief appeals’, and was able to collect a great deal of corn. Illtud loaded this corn onto several small ships, and set off across the perilous Channel in order to save the people of Brittany. Perhaps he had in mind the words of Christ: “I was hungry and you fed me...” (Matthew 25:35)

Certainly, the people of Brittany never forgot Illtud’s kindness towards them: even today some Breton churches and villages bear his name. Many churches in Wales are also dedicated to this compassionate man.

**

6th November: The Martyrs of Vietnam

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” The early Church Father Tertullian wrote that in the second century, but he could have been writing about Vietnam from 1745 onwards. For, during

the first 200 years of Christianity in Vietnam/Indo-China, a staggering 100,000 Christians are believed to have been martyred for their faith.

We know nothing of most of them; no historical records were kept. But we do know of 117 Christian martyrs in Vietnam, who died in the three Vietnamese kingdoms of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China. (1745 – 1862) They included eight bishops, 50 priests, and 59 laymen (among whom were catechists and tertiaries).

The early ones we know of were Spanish Dominicans, who were imprisoned and killed. In 1798 the first Vietnamese diocesan priests, John Dat and Emmanuel Nguyen, were martyred. During the first 20 years of the 19th century the Church grew steadily, only to face dire persecutions under the Annamite kings Minh-Mang (1820-41) and Tu Duc (1847-83). All foreign missionaries were thrown out, and Vietnamese Christians were ordered to renounce Christianity by trampling on the crucifix. Churches were destroyed and all mention of Christianity forbidden.

During those years, Christians in Vietnam died of hunger, thirst, and imprisonment in small cages. They had limbs cut off, were torn apart by hot pincers, drowned, beheaded, burned alive. Christians were marked on their faces with the words *ta dao* (false religion). But still the Church grew in Vietnam. Finally, in June 1862 a treaty between France and Annam guaranteed religious freedom. This marked the beginning of the end of the persecutions, and today the Church in Vietnam continues its witness.

**

7th November: Willibrord of York – apostle of Frisia

Did you know that the Netherlands first learned Christianity from a Yorkshireman? Willibrord was born in 658, to devout parents, and joined the Benedictines. In 678 he went Ireland to study at the Abbey of Rathmelsigi (a centre of European learning in the 7th century). 12 years later, in 690, Willibrord felt God had given him a daunting ‘call’ – to take Christianity to Frisia, (now mostly modern-day Netherlands).

Willibrord was not just courageous, but also prepared well. He took 12 companions to help him, and he had the support of both Pope Sergius and also the ruler of the region, Pippin II. The mission was successful, and five years later, Willibrord was given another challenge: to do for Frisia what Augustine had done for England – establish a metropolitan see at Utrecht, build a cathedral, and appoint the first suffragan bishops.

And so Willibrord became the first archbishop of Utrecht. He went on to establish an important monastery at Echternach (now in Luxembourg). It was not all plain sailing – in 714 Willibrord and the Christians faced persecution from the new pagan Frisia king. Churches were burnt and priests were killed. But Willibrord did not give up easily, and by 719 the king was dead and the church in Frisia continued to grow.

Willibrord even ventured up into Denmark, bought 30 slave-boys and educated them as Christians. At Walcheren, he destroyed a pagan idol, at the risk of his life.

Alcuin (historian) described Willibrord’s apostolate as based on energetic preaching and ministry. ‘Willibrord was always venerable, gracious and full of joy’. Certainly, he inaugurated 100 years of English Christian influence on the Continent, and thoroughly deserves his title of patron of Holland. When he died at 81, in 739, he was immediately venerated as a saint.

**

8th November: Four Crowned Martyrs

Has your boss ever tried to get you to do something that is against your Christian faith? If so, here are some saints for you. They chose to make a Christian 'stand' at work, even though it really irritated their boss.

Claudius, Nicostratus, Simpronian and Castorius were simple stonemasons in early 4th century Rome. They worked in the imperial quarries and workshops of Sirmium. They made a number of carvings for the Emperor Diocletian, who had a passion for building.

Then Diocletian decided he wanted a statue of Aesculapius, the ancient Greek god of medicine. Here Claudius, Nicostratus, Simpronian and Castorius hesitated: they were Christians, and not comfortable about making a 'god'. They demurred. Their line manager Lampadius was furious, and soon had them imprisoned for refusing to sacrifice to the gods. Claudius and his friends were in bad trouble – and then it got worse. Lampadius suddenly died. His family were distraught, and so blamed the stonemasons. Claudius and his companions were killed by drowning.

The courage of these four simple stonemasons to risk everything rather than make a stone statue of a god, was a great inspiration in the early Church. Their story was told and retold down the centuries... eventually Claudius and his friends became the patron saints of guilds of stonemasons in England.

**

10th November: Leo the Great - Pope who rescued doctrine of the Incarnation

How do you think of Jesus? As the Lord of lords in glory? Or as a human baby soon to be born in Bethlehem? November brings the glorious climax of the church year with the Sunday of Christ the King at the end of November – only to begin a new 'year' a week later, with Advent. So, the ways in which the Church speaks of Jesus this month could not be more dramatically different.

How can Jesus be both God and Man? Trying to get your head around the Incarnation is not easy, and so this is a good month to remember Leo the Great (d 461). In the 5th century, he 'rescued' the doctrine of the Incarnation at a time when the Church was really struggling with the onslaught of various attacks.

Leo, a deacon of Tuscan descent, became Pope at a time when Rome was reeling under repeated assault by the barbarians. As well as trying to patch up the material and spiritual damage they had done, Leo faced an even more deadly attack: the Church was being torn apart on the inside. There were various heresies raging, each trying to claim that their view of the person of Christ was the only right one.

Between the barbarians on the outside and the distortions of Manichaeism, Priscillianism, and Pelagianism on the inside, Leo was not in for an easy time. Yet this man of indomitable energy and devotion to duty pressed on. Leo was pope for 20 tumultuous years, but undoubtedly the most important contribution that he made was at a famous church council.

It was the Council of Chalcedon, in 451 – often regarded as a critical moment in Christian history. Leo presented a dogmatic letter (or Tome) to the Council. He wrote with remarkable clarity of thought and understanding. Jesus Christ, said Leo, is one Person, the Divine Word. In Jesus the two natures, the divine and the human, are permanently united without confusion or mixture.

When the Council read this document, it was exclaimed: 'Peter has spoken by Leo.' Leo's understanding was seen to encompass all the Bible teaching on the subject of who Jesus was. It became thenceforth part of the official teaching of the Christian Church.

**

10th November: Justus – leading the Church in troubled times

Does this sound familiar? An Archbishop of Canterbury tries to bring unity and calm to a Church split down the middle over seemingly irreconcilable differences, and all the while to promote the Gospel to the wider non-Christian society, in the face of widespread ignorance and even hostility towards Christianity.

This isn't Justin Welby, though. It was Justus, a 7th century archbishop of Canterbury. Like Justin Welby, he had a passion for mission – he began as one of the Roman missionaries sent in 601 by Pope Gregory the Great – to reinforce Augustine. Once in England, he was quickly put to work – becoming the first ever Bishop of Rochester, in 604. It was then that he joined with other church leaders to urge the Irish and British (Celtic) Christians to repair the great church divide of the time – to conform their customs to those of Rome. (They were largely ignored.)

In 616 things got worse. There was a pagan reaction in Kent and Essex, and without any support from the pagan King Edbald, Justus and Mellitus knew it was time to get out – quick. They escaped to France, and the whole English mission seemed in peril. Then – an unexpected breakthrough occurred – the king was converted. So back came Justus, to become Archbishop of Canterbury in 624. Pope Boniface V had faith in his ability and courage – he bestowed on him both the pallium and the power to consecrate bishops in England.

When Justus died in 627, he was buried at St Augustine's monastery. Then, in the 11th century, Justus was moved to a site in Canterbury Cathedral, behind the high altar.

**

11th November: Martin of Tours - pioneer of western monasticism

This winter, when you next see someone who looks both poor and cold, think of Martin of Tours (316 – 397). This monk bishop, born in Pannonia (now Hungary) became one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages.

Martin's father was a pagan officer in the Roman Army, and Martin was intended for the army as well. But from an early age Martin wanted to be a Christian, and he felt that as a Christian he could not serve the Roman Empire. Martin was imprisoned for this early 'conscientious objection', and not released until 357, when he was nearly 40.

One day Martin met a nearly naked beggar at Amiens. He took off his cloak, cut it in half and gave the half to the beggar. Soon after this, he had a dream in which Christ appeared to him, wearing the half of the cloak which Martin had given away.

Martin was the pioneer of western monasticism: he founded the first monastery in the whole of Gaul about 360. He was made bishop of Tours in 372 – by popular demand of both his clergy and his people.

As bishop, Martin continued his simple life as a monk, - and evangelist. Christianity had been largely confined to the urban centres of population, but Martin went further, and took Christianity to the *pagani* (country-men). For the next 25 years this greatly loved bishop travelled his diocese by donkey and by boat, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, and helping his people to tear down their heathen temples and sacred trees. He was sought out for his healing prayers for the sick, and also his defence of the faith from heretics.

Martin's emblem in English art is often that of a goose, whose annual migration is about this time of year. 'St Martin's Summer' in England is a spell of fine weather that sometimes occurs around 11th November.

**

13th November: Frances Xavier Cabrini – first 'saint' of New York City

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on America in 2001, many Americans were seen to be 'saintly' in their brave attempts to help save lives. But Frances (1850 – 1917) was the first citizen of the United States to be officially canonised as a saint – by Pope Pius XII in 1946. She founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and worked among orphans, children and the sick of New York.

**

17th November: Gregory of Tours - charity and compassion in dangerous times

Danger of torture, assassination, lootings, floods, famines and epidemics... life in France in the 6th century was as turbulent and violent as many of the world's hot spots are today. In the midst of all this Gregory (539 – 94) was born into a senatorial family who lived in the Auvergne.

He grew up seeing how the Church responded to all this social chaos at first hand: his family numbered several bishops, as well as saints (the two are not necessarily the same thing!). In due course Gregory decided to devote his life also to the Church, and so was ordained deacon in 563 and elected bishop of Tours in 573.

Gregory should be the patron saint of anyone who climbs to a powerful and privileged position – and then uses it in order to do great good. As a bishop of Merovingian Gaul, he became an expounder and defender of the Christian faith and of public morality. He practised charity and compassion on a large scale. He repaired churches, including the great Tours cathedral, destroyed by fire, and built new ones. He restored the tombs of martyrs and saints. He visited monasteries and nunneries, and also founded schools.

In addition to all this, Gregory was a prodigious author of books. His ten volume History of the Franks is his most famous work, but he wrote on saints as well. He had an advantage on other medieval historians such as Bede in that he had first-hand experience of the court-life of his time. Courts were treacherous places, and Gregory had to deal with four civil rulers of Tours during his 21 years as bishop.

He must have earned their respect: he was sent on diplomatic missions to other Frankish kings. Gregory made the most of every opportunity he had to bring Christian standards of living into those dark days in France. He was greatly loved, and long remembered.

**

18th November: Elizabeth of Hungary

Here is a saint for any young person who has a generous heart and a desire to please God, but who gets rather badly used by adults who should know better.

Elizabeth was born in 1207, a princess in the kingdom of Hungary. When she was four, she was sent to the court of the rulers of Thuringia in central Germany, to be betrothed to Louis IV.

At 14 she was married to Louis, and in 1223, when she was 16, some Franciscan friars arrived at the court. Elizabeth was inspired by them, and she became known for her many acts of charity. When flood, famine and plague hit Thuringia in 1226, Elizabeth distributed alms to the starving, and personally nursed many of the ill.

Elizabeth is best known for the miracle of the roses. She was taking bread to the poor one day when she met her husband out on a hunting party. The gentry were suspicious that she was stealing treasure from the castle, and so her husband asked her to reveal what was hidden under her cloak. Her cloak fell open, and a vision of white and red roses could be seen, which proved to her husband that God's protecting hand was over his wife. Hers was the first of many miracles that associate Christian saints with roses.

So far, so good, but then Konrad von Marburg, a priest and later inquisitor, was appointed Elizabeth's confessor, and began to gain considerable influence over her. When in 1227 Louis was sent off to join the Sixth Crusade, Konrad's power over Elizabeth grew. Then in September of that year, news came that Louis had died of a fever in Italy, just a few weeks before the birth of another child. Elizabeth reportedly said: 'He is dead. He is dead. It is to me as if the whole world died today.'

Certainly Elizabeth's world changed. She left the court and moved to Marburg. By now she had made solemn vows to Konrad, similar to those of a nun, promising him total obedience. He then treated her very harshly, setting severe restrictions on what she could eat, ordering physical beatings, and sending her three children away.

Elizabeth used her dowry money to build another hospital, this time at Marburg, and to personally care for the poor and sick. But not for long. Worn down by the harshness of Konrad's regime over her, and exposed to the many diseases of the poor, she died in 1231, aged only 24. But she left behind many poor people who loved her, and who owed their lives to her.

**

***NEW 19th November: Hilda - Abbess of Whitby**

Hilda played a key role in the early English Christian church, and she may even have been the first to encourage the writing of Christian poetry.

She was born a princess, into the Deiran (Northumbrian) dynasty, and her sister became Queen of the East Angles, with whom the Deiran had connections.

In those days East Anglia had close ties with the Gallic Church, and because of her sister, Hilda came under that influence. She was actually on her way to take her monastic vows near Paris when the Bishop of Lindisfarne, Aidan, called her back to Northumbria.

Back home, she went into seclusion for a time, before being sent to be abbess of a religious house in Hartlepool in 649.

Eight years later, Hilda felt moved to establish a religious community at Streasnaeshalch (later renamed Whitby). Her community was a royal establishment, a double monastery (both men and women) and became famous for its learning, with even five bishops trained there.

Whitby was also, of course, the venue for the famous Synod of Whitby in 664. With Hilda acting as hostess, the Synod met to decide upon the date of Easter. The issue at stake was greater than that, though, for the decision would sway the Church in Britain to adapt either the Celtic or Roman traditions. Although Hilda defended the Celtic church customs, she accepted with grace the decision

of the Synod to accept the Roman date for Easter, and she then worked to unite the Church throughout the land.

**

22nd November: St Cecilia - patron saint of musicians

If you are going to any concerts before Christmas, spare a thought for St Cecilia - the patron saint of musicians.

Cecilia is one of the most famous of the Roman martyrs of the 2nd century. As far as is known, she was born a noble lady of Rome who, despite her vow of virginity, was forced to marry an older pagan nobleman named Valerian. During the wedding, as the musicians played, Cecilia sat apart singing to God in her heart, and for that she was later declared the saint of musicians.

When the time came for her marriage to be consummated, Cecilia told Valerian that watching over her was an angel of the Lord, who would punish him if he sexually violated her but would love him if he respected her virginity.

Understandably startled by this, Valerian then asked to see the angel for himself. Cecilia replied that to do so, he must go to the third milestone on the Via Appia and be baptised by the Bishop of Rome. Valerian seems to have been a good-natured husband, because the story goes that he followed her suggestion, was baptised a Christian, and sure enough, saw the angel protecting his wife.

Being a Christian in those days was dangerous, and when the next wave of Roman persecutions began, Valerian and Cecilia were among those arrested. It is said that they died at the hands of the Roman prefect Turcius Almachius, perhaps in Sicily sometime between 176 and 180 AD.

One story goes that Cecilia was struck on the neck with a sword, and as she lay dying, asked that her house be converted into a church. Certainly, an early Roman Christian church, Santa Cecilia, was founded in the fourth century in the Trastevere section of Rome, reputedly on the site of the house in which she lived.

In the centuries since then, a number of musical compositions have been dedicated to her, and her feast day has become the occasion for many concerts and musical festivals.

St Cecilia is frequently depicted playing a viola, a small organ, or other musical instrument.

**

25th November: Catherine of Alexandria – patron saint of young girls and nurses

Catherine is thought to have been a noble girl who lived in the 4th century. She was persecuted for her Christianity, and despised marriage with the Emperor because she was a 'bride of Christ'. According to the legend, Catherine was no push-over intellectually, either: she disputed successfully with 50 philosophers who were called in to convince her of the errors of Christianity.

Catherine protested against the persecution of Christians by Maxentius, and then she herself was tortured: broken on a wheel (later called Catherine wheel), but the machine then broke down itself, injuring bystanders. Catherine was then beheaded.

This legend strongly appealed to the Middle Age imagination. Catherine became the patron of young girls, students, philosophers, nurses and craftsmen such as wheelwrights, spinners and millers.

In England 62 churches were dedicated to her, and 170 medieval bells still bear her name. 'Lives', poems, miracle plays, stained-glass windows, panels and paintings have all been done in Catherine's honour.

**

30th November: Andrew – patron saint of Scotland

The apostle Andrew is patron saint of Scotland. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Andrew and his brother Simon Peter were the very first two disciples whom Jesus called. 'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' (Matt 4:18,19)

Without more ado, they obeyed. 'At once they left their nets and followed him.' The story is touching for the simple but total faith that they had in Jesus.

Whenever the gospels mention the disciples, Andrew's name is always in the first four. Rather than a boisterous leader of men (like Peter), he seems to have been an approachable person who wanted to help people.

It was Andrew who helped introduce a group of Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-2) and Andrew who offered Jesus the five small barley loaves and two small fishes when Jesus challenged them to feed the five thousand. (John 6:8) His faith in Jesus over small things was richly rewarded, and this faithful, kindly Galilean fisherman turned disciple went on to become one of the 12 apostles of the Christian Church.

Andrew never settled back in Capernaum by Galilee. Instead, his 'fishing for men' seems to have taken him far. One ancient tradition links him with Greece, where both Scythia and Epirus claimed him as their apostle. Another place in Greece, Patras in Achaia, claimed to be the place where Andrew was eventually martyred, in about AD60.

Like Jesus, he was crucified, but the story goes that during the two days it took him to die, he preached earnestly to the people about Jesus. Andrew was not afraid of death on a cross – he had seen it before, and knew one thing for certain: because of Jesus, there was nothing but eternal life ahead of him.

In the West, Andrew's feast-day was universal from the 6th century, and hundreds of churches were named after him in Italy, France and England. But how did he end up as patron saint of Scotland?

Well, according to one ancient legend, his relics were taken from Patras to Scotland in the 8th century, and ended up in Fife, where a church dedicated to him was built and became a centre for evangelisation and later pilgrimage. As Andrew was the only apostle to make it as far as Scotland, he was chosen as patron saint.

But Andrew did not stay in Scotland. After the fall of Constantinople in 1204, it is said that the Crusaders took his relics to Amalfi. From there the despot Thomas Palaeologus sent his head to the pope in Rome in 1461, where it became one of the most treasured possessions of St Peters, until it was sent to the church in Constantinople by Paul VI.

In art Andrew is depicted with a normal Latin cross in the most ancient examples. The saltire cross 'X', commonly called St Andrew's Cross, and which represents Scotland on the Union Jack, was associated with him from the 10th century.

**

30th November: Andrew - first disciple of Jesus

Andrew, whose feast day ends the Christian year on 30th November, is probably best known to us as the patron saint of Scotland, though his only connection with the country is that some of his bones were reputedly transported in the 8th century to Fife and preserved at a church in a place now named St Andrews.

In fact, there are so many legends about him all over Europe and the Middle East that it's safest to stick to what the Gospels tell us - though the strong tradition that he was martyred by crucifixion is probably true and is perpetuated in the 'St Andrew's Cross', the 'saltyre' of Scotland.

The Gospels record that he was one of the first disciples of Jesus, and the very first to bring someone else to Christ - his own brother. Like many fervent Jews at the time Andrew and an unnamed companion had been drawn to the desert, to be taught by the charismatic prophet known to us as John the Baptist. Many thought that he was the long-promised Messiah, but John insisted that he was not. 'I am the voice crying in the wilderness,' he told the crowds. 'Prepare the way of the Lord! One comes after me who is greater than I am.'

So when one day John pointed out Jesus to Andrew and his friend and described him as the 'Lamb of God', the two young men assumed that the next stage of their spiritual search was about to unfold. So, as Jesus made off, they followed him.

All the more strange, then (though, on reflection, very true to human nature) that when Jesus turned and asked them what they were 'seeking', all they could come up with was a lame enquiry about his current place of residence: 'where are you staying?' Or, perhaps, they were hinting that what they were seeking could not be dealt with in a brief conversation. If they could come to his lodgings, perhaps their burning questions might be answered.

The reply of Jesus was the most straight-forward invitation anyone can receive: 'Come and see'. Come and see what I'm like, what I do, the sort of person I am. What an invitation!

The results of their response were in this case life-changing - for themselves, and for many other people. Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. The next day Jesus met Philip and called him to 'follow'. Philip then brought Nathaniel. The little apostolic band who would carry the message of Jesus to the whole world was being formed. They came, they saw, they were conquered! And right at the front of the column, as it were, was Andrew, the first disciple of Jesus.