

SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

A Monthly Miscellany

February 2023

Feast Days in February 2023

1

St. Bridgid of Ireland

2

Candlemas

(Presentation of Child Jesus in the Temple/

Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

3

St. Blaise

4

St. Joseph of Leonessa

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Epiphanytide Ends]

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Septuagesima (Pre-Lent) begins in the evening]

5

5th. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Septuagesima Sunday (Third Sunday before Lent)]

St. Agatha

6

St. Paul Miki & Companions

7

St. Colette of Corbie

8

St. Jerome Emiliani

9

Bl. Marianus Scotus

10

St. Scholastica

11

Our Lady of Lourdes

Lateran Treaty Day

(Anniversary of the foundation of [Vatican City](#))

12

6th. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Sexagesima Sunday (Second Sunday before Lent)]

St. Saturninus & Companions

13

St. Catherine de Ricci

14

St. Valentine

St. Cyril & St. Methodius

Valentine's Day

15

Presidents' Day

St. Claude de la Colombiere

16

St. Onesimus

17

Founders of the Orders of Servites

18

St. Simon of Jerusalem

19

7th. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Quinquagesima Sunday (Next Sunday before Lent)]

[This Year in the Ordinariate: Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle (*Transferred*)]

St. Conrad of Piacenza

20

St. Eucherius

21

St. Peter Damian

Ordinary Time Stops for Lent & Easter

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: Septuagesima (Pre-Lent) ends for Lent]

22

Ash Wednesday

(Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle)

Lent Starts

23

St. Polycarp

24

St. Ethelbert

25

St. Tarasius

26

1st. Sunday of Lent

St. Porphyrius

27

St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows

28

St. Hilary

(29 St. Auguste Chapdelaine)



Saint Brigid of Ireland ... Feastday 1st February

There is much debate over her birthparents, but it is widely believed her mother was Brocca, a Christian baptized by Saint Patrick, and her father was Dubthach, a Leinster chieftain. Brocca was a slave, therefore Brigid was born into slavery. When Dubthach's wife discovered Brocca was pregnant, she was sold to a Druid landowner. It is not clear if Brocca was unable to produce milk or was not present to care for Brigid, but legend states Brigid vomited any food the druid attempted to feed her, as he was impure, so a white cow with red ears sustained her instead.

Many stories of Brigid's purity followed her childhood. She was unable to keep from feeding the poor and healing them. One story says Brigid once gave her mother's entire store of butter, that was later replenished after Brigid prayed.

When she was about ten-years-old, Brigid was returned to her father's home, as he was her legal master. Her charity did not end when she left her mother, and she donated his possessions to anyone who asked. Eventually, Dubthach became tired of her charitably nature and took her to the king of Leinster, with the intention of selling her. As he spoke to the king, Brigid gave his jeweled sword to a beggar so he could barter it for food for his family. When the king, who was a Christian, saw this, he recognized her heart and convinced Dubthach to grant her freedom by saying, "Her merit before God is greater than ours."

After being freed, Brigid returned to the Druid and her mother, who was in charge of the Druid's dairy. Brigid took over and often gave away milk, but the dairy prospered despite the charitable practice, and the Druid eventually freed Brocca. Brigid then returned to Dubthach, who had arranged for her to marry a bard. She refused and made a vow to always be chaste.

Legend has it Brigid prayed that her beauty be taken so no one would want to marry her, and the prayer was granted. It was not until after she made her final vows that her beauty was restored. Another tale says that when Saint Patrick heard her final vows, he accidentally used the form for ordaining priests. When the error was brought to his attention, he simply replied, "So be it, my son, she is destined for great things."

Little is known about Saint Brigid's life after she entered the Church, but in 40 she founded a monastery in Kildare, called the Church of the Oak. It was built above a pagan shrine to the Celtic goddess Brigid, which was beneath a large oak tree. Brigid and seven friends organized communal consecrated religious life for women in Ireland and she founded two monastic institutions, one for men and one for women. Brigid invited a hermit called Conleth to help her in Kildare as a spiritual pastor.

Her biographer reported that Brigid chose Saint Conleth "to govern the church along with herself." She later founded a school of art that included metalwork and illumination, which Conleth led as well. It was at this school that the Book of Kildare, which the Gerald of Wales praised as "the work of angelic, and not human skill," was beautifully illuminated, but was lost three centuries ago.

There is evidence that Brigid was a good friend of Saint Patrick's and that the *Trias Thaumaturga* claimed, "Between St. Patrick and Brigid, the pillars of the Irish people, there was so great a friendship of charity that they had but one heart and one mind. Through him and through her Christ performed many great works." Saint Brigid helped many people in her lifetime, but on February 1 525, she passed away of natural causes. Her body was initially kept to the right of the high altar of Kildare Cathedral, with a tomb "adorned with gems and precious stones and crowns of gold and silver," but in 878, during the Scandinavian raids, her relics were moved to the tomb of Patrick and Columba.

In 1185, John de Courcy had her remains relocated in Down Cathedral. Today, Saint Brigid's skull can be found in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Lumiar, Portugal. The tomb in which it is kept bears the inscription, "Here in these three tombs lie the three Irish knights who brought the head of St. Brigid, Virgin, a native of Ireland, whose relic is preserved in this chapel. In memory of which, the officials of the Altar of the same Saint caused this to be

done in January AD 1283." A portion of the skull was relocated to St. Bridget's Church and another was sent to the Bishop of Lisbon in St. Brigid's church in Killester. Saint Brigid's likeness is often depicted holding a reed cross, a crozier, or a lamp.

Saint Brigid Hearth Keeper Prayer

Courtesy of SaintBrigids.org

Brigid of the Mantle, encompass us,
Lady of the Lambs, protect us,
Keeper of the Hearth, kindle us.
Beneath your mantle, gather us,
And restore us to memory.
Mothers of our mother, Foremothers strong.
Guide our hands in yours,
Remind us how to kindle the hearth.
To keep it bright, to preserve the flame.
Your hands upon ours, Our hands within yours,
To kindle the light, Both day and night.
The Mantle of Brigid about us,
The Memory of Brigid within us,
The Protection of Brigid keeping us
From harm, from ignorance, from heartlessness.
This day and night,
From dawn till dark, From dark till dawn.



Saint Valentine's Day

14th February

The true story of St Valentine, his legend and legacy of love



Saint Valentine, depicted in an 1853 engraving by Cibera. Credit: Alamy

Whatever the truth of the real St Valentine, the middle of February has been a favourite time for lovers since records began. We take a look at the curious history of St Valentine, and how an ancient martyr came to be remembered as a champion of romantic love.

In modern times, St Valentine's Day is more closely associated with cards, chocolates and commercial gain, but it has not always been the case.

Although the story of the saint and the origins of the feast day are clouded by myth, February 14 has long been celebrated as the day of lovers.

The earliest version of the story dates back to ancient Rome and the pagan festival of Lupercalia. Shepherds outside the city walls waged a constant battle against hungry wolves and prayed to the god Lupercus to watch over their flocks. Every year in February, the Romans would repay the god's vigilance with a festival, which doubled as a celebration of fertility and the onset of Spring. Newlywed women would be whipped by februa (strips of goat skin and the derivation of our word February) to purify their bodies in preparation for childbirth.

One of the highlights of Lupercalia came on February 14 with an erotic tribute to Juno Februata, the goddess of feverish love (the equivalent of Cilla Black). The names of maidens were drawn at random by young men and the resultant couple would become partners at the feast and even for life.

“The bishop was executed on February 14.... On the eve of his death, he sent a passionate letter to his beloved, signed simply ‘your Valentine’.”

The festival was extremely popular and lasted for centuries. After Constantine had christianised Rome, the Church tried to clamp down on pagan activities and Lupercalia, with its lurid temptations, was an obvious target. Pope Galasius, in the 5th Century, needed to find a suitable replacement for the wolf god Lupercus and chose a bishop who had been martyred 200 years previously: Valentine.

The emperor Aurelius had imprisoned Valentine in 272 AD for continuing to marry Christian soldiers, despite royal decree (Aurelius needed them to fight his wars). In prison, the bishop cured his jailer's daughter of blindness and the pair fell head over heels in love (quite literally ‘love at first sight’.) Ultimately, their desires were frustrated as the bishop was executed on February 14 the following year. On the eve of his death, the condemned man sent a passionate letter to his beloved, signed simply ‘your Valentine’.

Whatever the truth, the intention of the Church to curb Lupercalia only served to extend the tradition of celebrating true love in the middle of February and any later attempts to take away the romantic angle proved unsuccessful. It was the mediaeval English who would take the saint's day to a new level and guaranteed its future. One theory is that the word ‘valentine’ comes from the Normanga latin, meaning gallant or lover of

women, which further enriched the romance of Valentine's Day. (According to etymologists, the letters v and g were once used interchangeably.)



Roses such as Constance Spry — David Austin's first-ever 'English' rose — have long been the flower of choice for Valentine's Day. Picture: Charles Quest-Ritson

Young ladies in England would write the names of prospective lovers on slips of paper, before rolling them in clay and placing them in a bowl of water. Whichever name rose to the surface first, would be their Valentine. In Scotland, names were drawn from a hat three times and if the same name appeared each time then marriage would follow. Of course, it was possible to increase your chances of finding the right name. The name of your Valentine was then worn on your sleeve for the remainder of the day.

It was not just a day for humans, either. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that birds chose their partners on St Valentine's Day and poets often rejoiced in the link between lovebirds and lovers. According to the historian Peggy Robbins, many superstitions were related to birds seen by maidens on Valentine's Day. If she saw a blackbird, she would marry a clergyman; a goldfinch, a millionaire; a redbreast, a sailor; a crossbill, a quarrelsome man. A wryneck would condemn the poor lady to the fate of an old maid.

To improve their chances of finding true love, single girls could run round a church twelve times without stopping; lay bay leaves sprinkled in rosewater on their pillow; or even eat a hard-boiled egg at midnight, shell and all. A lady approaching old-maid status was advised to try all of the above.

The popular act of handing a red rose to your lover was made famous by Robert Burns' poem 'My love is like a red red rose' although the Scot, who was well-versed in the ways of love, was not talking about Valentine's Day. Indeed, true lovers will wear the yellow crocus over their heart, in dedication to St Valentine. It is thought he once drew two strangers together with a single crocus and they never parted again.



Yellow Crocus — the other flower of love...

The Europeans are not the only ones to celebrate love, fertility and purification at this time of year. Since 767 BC, the Japanese city of Inazawa has held the Shintu ritual Hadaka Matsuri, the Naked Festival, in February to purify its people for the year ahead.

It is a great honour to be chosen as the naked man, but he has his work cut out. He is shaved from head to toe and sent to the Kounomiya Shrine at the other end of the city. But 9,000 sweaty men in loin-clothes try to stop him, as each competes to touch and grab the naked man. In doing so he will absorb their bad luck and evil deeds. When the naked man does finally

arrive at the shrine, having endured a whole day at the mercy of the crowd, he is dressed in robes and chased out of the town to rid the town of all its evil.

Further west, on February 15 this year, (the first Full Moon of the Chinese New Year) young couples in Hong Kong will meet to celebrate Yuen Siu, the Spring Lantern Festival. Everyone holds lanterns to avoid being snatched by ghosts and spirits swooping down and snatching them away. The lanterns carry riddles and sweet nothings, similar to Valentine messages, and the young men and women play games to find out who will be their partner.

In the past, it was the one day of the year when a woman could come out, with a chaperone, and be seen by eligible men. In the days when women's feet were bound, it was often the one time when she could appear in public with unbound feet.

On the other side of the world, in the island paradise of Tahiti, the Love Marathon is run every year on the Ile de Moorea. One thousand athletes race round crystal blue lagoons and tropical forests, receiving pineapples, papayas, mangos and coconuts en route to speed their way. That evening the party begins and with the sweet scent of the tiare flower in the air, Vahinedancers, wearing the traditional more (grass skirts) and cache-titi (strategically-placed coconuts) sway to the beat of Tahitian drums.



The CIA and the Rosary Priest: Venerable Patrick Peyton, CSC

by Meg Hunter-Kilmer

January 27, 2023



The governor of São Paulo Adhemar de Barros receives Father Patrick Peyton (right)

There was a time when Fr. Patrick Peyton was a household name. It was a time when he regularly spoke to crowds of over a million, when souls lined up to be saved and hardened hearts were transformed by grace everywhere he went. And then Rome told him to back off. And he did. He did not start a schism. He did not complain to the press. Rome had spoken. Case closed. Fr. Peyton's covert million-dollar deal with the CIA was off.

Venerable Patrick Peyton (1909–1992) was born in Ireland, the sixth of nine children raised in a three-room farmhouse in County Mayo. There his

life was filled with hard work and deep joy as his mother and his chronically ill father eked out a living on their small plot of land. However hard they worked, though, they never collapsed into bed before joining as a family to pray the Rosary. From infancy, Patrick Peyton was steeped in the family Rosary, the pious practice that drove him to every corner of the world and led him to preach to some twenty-eight million people over the course of his life.

Patrick was a fifteen-year-old dropout when he preached his first sermon on the family Rosary—to a man for whom Patrick had been working as a hired hand. It was the boy's first time staying with a family that did not pray together. After a long week of worrying about them, he finally decided to speak, though with less eloquence than he would employ years later when his Family Rosary Crusade took him around the world.

But between this sermon and the seminary lay a path of some years. Patrick had to first spend his days literally breaking rocks to earn his bread. His temper made his attempt to earn a living rather difficult. As a teen, he stormed out of school—permanently—because he was mad at his teacher. After that, he kicked his ailing father for critiquing his work and lost a job after mouthing off to his employer. At eighteen, volatile Patrick saw no path forward in Ireland, so he and his brother Tom set off for America, where they settled in Pennsylvania with their older sisters.

Though he had often dreamed of the priesthood as a child, there had not been money for schooling and his temper had complicated things as well. Disappointed, Patrick had laid that dream to rest, sure that he could please God in other ways. But his big sisters kept dreaming for him, and when he arrived in Pennsylvania they introduced him to a priest who had been prevailed upon to employ Patrick as a janitor—a job he only reluctantly accepted after many weeks of unemployment. He was not ready to hope for a vocation again, but God was working, and as Patrick cleaned the Scranton cathedral day in and day out, the silence made space for him to hear God's call again.

Finally, one day, he was overcome. He dropped his work and ran into the priest's office, calling out, "I want to be a priest!" That practical man began by quizzing Patrick on grammar, then sent him over to enroll in high school (with a promise that he would take care of the tuition). And so the 6'4" nineteen-year-old squeezed himself into a desk beside high school freshmen; he was soon joined by his brother Tom. After making the acquaintance of some Holy Cross missionaries at the end of that year, the brothers discerned vocations to the Congregation of Holy Cross and bade their Pennsylvania family goodbye as they set off even further west to Notre Dame.

After three more years of high school in South Bend, Patrick and Tom entered the Holy Cross novitiate and earned their bachelor's degrees in 1937, when Patrick was twenty-eight years old. Then they were off to major seminary, but Patrick contracted a serious case of tuberculosis shortly before he was to be ordained. The doctors had little hope for his recovery and eventually presented him with a choice: either to undergo a surgery that might save him but would certainly leave him permanently disabled . . . or to resolve himself to prayer. Patrick was torn for a time but ultimately entrusted his health to the Blessed Mother; after a year of serious illness, he began to expect a miracle and soon found himself completely healed. Convinced that Mary had saved him and that he had to serve her in return, Patrick returned to his seminary studies and was ordained with his brother in 1941 at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of Notre Dame.

As the United States entered World War II, Fr. Peyton's mind turned again and again to the fighting across the world. Anxious to find a way to help, he thought back to the thousands of evenings he had spent praying the Rosary with his family. He became convinced that the way to peace was the family Rosary; if he could convince families to pray the Rosary together, surely the world would be changed.

It began small: he wrote letters to bishops, visited Catholic organizations, and recruited Sisters to help him spread the word. Then letters went out to every pastor in the country—all 12,600 of them—and soon Fr. Peyton and his crew were printing hundreds of thousands of pamphlets while he began to travel the country preaching on the family Rosary. To increase his reach, he began work on a regular radio show but knew he needed something to draw audiences in, so Fr. Peyton hopped on a train from Albany to Los Angeles to knock on the stars' doors and ask them to participate.

He had already gotten Bing Crosby to appear on a radio special—by cold-calling Hollywood's biggest name; now Gregory Peck, Shirley Temple, and Maureen O'Hara joined the growing list of celebrities that would one day include Jack Benny, Lucille Ball, Grace Kelly, Jimmy Stewart, Frank Sinatra, and nearly all the who's who of Catholic Hollywood (and plenty of Protestants besides). These stars were featured in Family Theater's weekly radio program, which aired for nearly a decade, and later in film and television projects.

As Fr. Peyton began to travel internationally, he also commissioned thousands of men to go door-to-door and collect pledges from families who vowed to pray the Rosary together daily. Next came short films on each mystery of the Rosary. Then the Family Rosary Crusade was spreading throughout the world, with Fr. Peyton begging for free airtime and advertising space from every newspaper and TV or radio station he could find. Weeks of preparation, advertising, press releases, pastoral letters,

homilies, and personal invitations to each crusade led to crowds of over a million in multiple cities. Fr. Peyton would tell his story, of his family praying in County Mayo, and his miraculous healing through Mary's intercession, and would insist on the power of the family Rosary to save the family and the world. "The family that prays together stays together," he would say, and the people believed him, pledging by the millions to pray the Rosary in their families.

Though his ministry was initially focused on English-speaking countries, Fr. Peyton soon found himself in south Asia and Africa, where he often employed translators. But when he finally arrived in Latin America—after ten years of crisscrossing the globe—he preached in mediocre Spanish; this was no great loss, as he was not a particularly talented speaker in English either. Actress Loretta Young, who supported Fr. Peyton with her talent as well as her finances, spoke frankly about his talent: "a terrible speaker—very unsophisticated." His lack of skill made his success all the more obviously a gift from God through the hands of the Blessed Mother. Through her prayers, a simple man spoke with great conviction and sincerity and millions upon millions recommitted themselves to prayer.

But Fr. Peyton was doing more than just encouraging family prayer. He was convinced that the family Rosary was a path to peace, which meant the defeat of communism. "The Rosary is the offensive weapon that will destroy communism," he claimed; many agreed with him and trusted him to lead the campaign. In 1948, Fr. James Gillis, CSP, a national commentator, insisted that Fr. Peyton's Family Rosary Crusade would "sweep the world of communism." Fr. Declan Flynn, OFM, agreed, declaring, "Fr. Patrick Peyton [is] a twentieth-century knight [who] rides out to meet the devil of Communism with the flashing sword of the Rosary."

It was this anti-communist work that led to Fr. Peyton's unexpected alliance with the CIA. His friend and benefactor Peter Grace was convinced that Peyton's work could be instrumental in preventing the spread of communism in Latin America. Shortly after the Family Rosary Crusade first arrived in South America, Grace met with Allen Dulles, director of the CIA, to suggest as much. Grace and Dulles then met with Vice President Richard Nixon and a month later \$20,000 was passed to Fr. Peyton to assist him in his work—the first installment of the CIA's support which eventually added up to over a million dollars. Fr. Peyton had been planning to go to Bolivia next, but Chile was suggested instead, so to Chile he went.

It is important to note that the overarching plan for the Family Rosary Crusade did not change, though dates and locations may have. But the preaching remained the same, the films the same, the door-to-door ministry the same. Fr. Peyton took the money (and suggestions) of the U.S. government because he believed, it seems, that they just wanted to help

him do what the Blessed Mother had asked him to do. In this matter, he was something of an innocent, especially as regards the activity of the CIA in supporting or destabilizing various Latin American regimes.

To him, this was money that Mary had sent so that he could keep bringing families to prayer. Besides, he trusted Peter Grace completely, writing in 1961, “Of all the men in the entire world, Peter is the one, and the only one to whom we can look for financial protection, defense and security of the Crusade. To be away from Peter for many months is to be away from the very source that enables us to continue financially.” Clearly whatever Grace recommended, Fr. Peyton would have been inclined to accept, however imprudent it might have seemed to others.

Fr. Peyton was not the only missionary to work with the CIA; many American missionaries—both Catholic and Protestant—passed information to the government and received funding to support their work. These relationships were largely unknown to the wider world and seem only to have been publicly revealed and condemned by the Church (and shortly thereafter by the CIA itself) in the 1970s, leaving us the very likely possibility that Fr. Peyton (naively) saw absolutely no conflict of interest in his relationship with the CIA.

With their support, he continued his work for seven more years, with government observers sending glowing reports to Washington, insisting that each crusade was a turning point in the fight against communism in whatever country he was in. Though Fr. Peyton had no direct connection to the events that transpired, there was even an anti-communist coup in Brazil that took place in the midst of a campaign of Rosary Crusades throughout the country, only two months after one was held in the capital. The new president of Brazil explicitly said that the Family Rosary Crusade formed the people such that they were able to revolt—a claim that Fr. Peyton did not dispute.

But while Fr. Peyton saw nothing untoward in all this, other Holy Cross priests were more aware of the political ramifications and potential scandal of seeming to be aligned with one political movement or another—or of an actual alliance, as in the case of Fr. Peyton and the Family Rosary Crusade. Fr. William Belyea wrote, “I think the danger we must avoid is that of permitting any political party to identify itself with us.” Fr. Peyton, on the other hand, had eyes only for the mission. He would promote the family Rosary and devotion to Our Lady, whatever the cost. Fr. Jerome Lawyer, CSC, was entirely unsurprised by the arrangement, saying, “It was simply another way to get money, and Pat would do anything to get money for Our Lady.” His single-mindedness had made him a tremendously successful evangelist but had also blinded him to the dangers posed by an alliance

between the Church and any government organization, especially one such as the CIA.

Fr. Peyton's superiors were concerned. Fr. Germaine Lalande, CSC, superior general of the Congregation, wrote a warning to Fr. Peyton, encouraging caution, "in order that the Crusade, in the mind of the people, may not be interpreted as having political overtones." Lalande was far wearier than Fr. Peyton, far more suspicious of the CIA's intentions and of Fr. Peyton's ability to resist (or discern) anything unseemly. He cautioned Fr. Peyton's provincial, Fr. Richard Sullivan, of the possible scandal as well as the danger of political influences, but Fr. Sullivan thought it worth the risk.

Then Fr. Ted Hesburgh came to know of the situation, informed by Peter Grace who had orchestrated the whole thing. He wrote to Fr. Lalande immediately, saying, "I cannot alter my opinion that this situation is extremely dangerous . . . I believe that all of the good would be destroyed, as well as many other innocent works, if the facts of the matter ever came to light." Fr. Lalande agreed and summoned Fr. Peyton to Rome, where he defended himself and his situation, intent on clarifying why he felt it was an appropriate arrangement. Lots of missionaries got aid from the U.S. government, Fr. Peyton insisted. If he did not, it would bankrupt his religious community. There was no way he could continue this work without this support. In this matter, the Church and the nation were working toward the same end: the destruction of communism.

Lalande was unconvinced. He urged Peyton to distance himself, insisting that he must try to find another source of funding. He warned of the danger. But he did not forbid him. Still, Lalande's conscience was not at ease. He reached out to friends at the Vatican for counsel; those friends were so shocked they arranged a near-immediate meeting with Pope St. Paul VI in the summer of 1965, who declared unequivocally that the Family Rosary Crusade must immediately cease accepting any funding at all from the CIA.

Fr. Patrick Peyton, a poor boy from Ireland, had obtained over a million dollars from the CIA, merely for doing the work he would have done anyway. Fr. Patrick Peyton, a manual laborer who had dropped out of high school, was a household name, speaking to millions of people. Anybody might have felt proud. Anybody might have resisted such a directive, believing such success to be the very work of God. Anybody might have been forgiven a few years' delay, if not an outright refusal to submit. How often do we justify our defiance of ecclesiastical authorities because we are sure we know better than they do?

The boy with a temper had grown into a stubborn man with a laser-focused will—in regard to his work for Mary, at least, and that work was now under threat. But Fr. Peyton wanted, more than anything, to be faithful to the God who had called him and to the Blessed Mother who had saved him when he was dying of tuberculosis. And he knew that sainthood is not found in defiance (however well-meaning) or in pride (however well-earned). Though it took a few months to tie up the loose ends (according to the directives of his provincial, who had permission from Rome), Fr. Peyton wrote the Holy Father as soon as an exit strategy was approved by his superiors. He had fought hard to keep his funding. His request had been denied. So he would do it without government money. He was the Crusade's good servant, but God's first.

This was not the only time Fr. Peyton's single-mindedness led him to act imprudently for the sake of his mission. He spent the 1960s embroiled in a legal battle after he had encouraged Sarita East, a wealthy widow, to rewrite her will in favor of his apostolate (also at the prompting of Peter Grace). When Mrs. East died, the diocese that had previously been her primary beneficiary brought a lawsuit against Grace (and Peyton), alleging that the men had used undue coercion on her. The public battle that ensued caused great scandal as churchmen fought for money and slung all the mud that often accompanies such disputes. Fr. Peyton had little to do with the affair (other than being named as an alleged co-conspirator); his attention remained fixed on his ministry, sometimes to the detriment of that same ministry.

His unwavering focus on the Family Rosary Crusade made it difficult for him to form fraternal bonds with other members of his Congregation, leaving his relationship with them rather strained. He was interested in little outside his work, which made him a stilted conversationalist until talk turned to Mary, and he was so convinced of being directed by the Blessed Mother in prayer that he often ran roughshod over others' work, insisting that months of planning be scrapped in favor of whatever new revelation he had been given.

Pious and effective and well-intentioned as he was, Fr. Peyton was not always an easy man to be friends with, let alone to be one's brother in religion. He was stubborn and controlling when it came to his work, unceasingly demanding of those who worked with and for him and uncompromising with his expectations. He took a much looser view of obedience than most other members of the Congregation, especially when his vision for his work was threatened, often claiming that he was submitting to a higher obedience: obedience to the will of the Blessed Mother.

But every bit of it was in service to the Gospel. Irish journalist George Gill said of him,

In my more than twenty years in Irish journalism . . . never had I come face to face with a man so humble, so saintly, so sincere, so unostentatious, so absorbed in his noble ideal and single-hearted purpose, and so preeminently equipped with the qualities of mind and heart for his glorious global mission as Fr. Peyton, CSC.

Actress Loretta Young, who knew Fr. Peyton well, marveled at the love of Mary that drove him, saying, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a man, ever, in this world anyway, in love with a woman the way he was with her. There was no pretense about it. You could see him just glow when he would talk about her.”

But no amount of fervor could push Fr. Peyton’s ministries through the struggles they were facing in the mid-1960s. As radio became obsolete, Family Theater found itself unable to break into film and television as it had into radio. Meanwhile, popular piety was moving away from the Rosary in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. And all the while, there was not enough money coming in to replace the loss of CIA funding for the Family Rosary Crusades. Fr. Peyton tried to adjust, pivoting to a Crusade for Family Prayer and inviting non-Catholic families to lead assembled crowds in prayers from their traditions as well. It was too much—or, perhaps, not enough. Regardless, the numbers began to dwindle as the years went by. The Crusade continued to travel through Latin America, now emphasizing social justice as well as prayer, and enjoyed some success, but less and less as the 1970s began.

Fr. Peyton remained confident—not in himself, perhaps, but in the eternal power of the Rosary that had lost so much popularity of late but was experiencing, in his words, an eclipse. “It is exactly that,” he insisted, “an eclipse. The Rosary is like the moon. When the eclipse is over, it will be all the brighter.” Though the Rosary was at the center of his preaching, it was by no means the entirety of his spiritual life. Throughout his priesthood, Fr. Peyton remained committed to daily Mass and a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour. Still, he believed the Rosary to be the most important of all devotions. Even when his ministry shifted toward a broader approach to family prayer, Fr. Peyton insisted, “It goes without saying then that we must advocate Family Prayer—but cannot stop there. We must do all in our power to lead the family to pray the Rosary.”

A health crisis brought on by merciless overwork compelled Fr. Peyton to take some time to rest just as filming was beginning on *The Messiah*, a film into which he had invested an inordinate amount of money. When he

recovered, he continued his work advising the film, but was devastated when it was released to terrible reviews. This stress could only affect his health negatively, and Fr. Peyton soon began to decline. He had diabetes and developed a significant heart condition. As his health suffered, other Holy Cross priests began to take over leadership of different aspects of Fr. Peyton's apostolates.

Always a micro-manager, Fr. Peyton struggled mightily with the need to watch others make decisions he would not have made, especially when they continued to de-emphasize the Rosary that was the driving force of Fr. Peyton's life—and especially where they were successful where Peyton had ceased to be. He became embroiled in conflicts with men who were leading ministries that were offshoots of his own, with money often at the root of the problem. There were clearly faults on both sides of the issue, but for Fr. Peyton's part they continued to be the faults that plagued him throughout life: a rigid inability to surrender his work into the hands of Providence.

Even this speaks to the virtues for which his supporters feel he should be canonized: sincerity, devotion, and the complete dedication of his life to the will of God through Mary. Though he rubbed elbows with the stars, Fr. Peyton remained remarkably down-to-earth, always willing to take a moment to pray with someone or to listen to people's woes. He may have been brusque and forceful when it came to his work, but he had no pride when it came to himself. This is what makes sense of a cause for canonization being opened for a man who acted as Peyton did: for Mary he was willing to do anything, knock on any door, burn any bridge; for himself, he would do nothing of the sort.

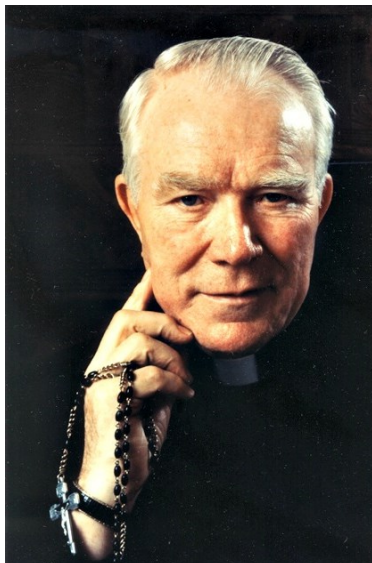
Even those who did not care for Peyton never seem to have asserted that he was selfish or proud, though his actions might have seemed so; instead, they insisted that he made imprudent financial choices and grasped at control not for himself but in an attempt to serve the Blessed Mother as faithfully as she deserved. And canonization, mercifully, is not a declaration that a person did everything right, nor even a seal of approval on his personality. Canonization is an assertion that a person is in heaven, that his life is worthy of imitation. For all Fr. Patrick Peyton's flaws, he was wholeheartedly given over in service to the Lord, his Mother, and his Church—even when it cost him mightily. That is worth emulating.

Fr. Peyton spent the 1970s and 1980s continuing his work throughout the world, though to less acclaim in most cases. One exception was a 1985 Crusade in Manila that drew two million people; two and a half months later the twenty-year reign of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was brought to an end in a bloodless revolution. But this time there was no question of CIA involvement or of politicization of the Rosary; instead, it seems the spiritual renewal inaugurated by the Crusade really had worked a miracle. Peyton

grabbed headlines another time when he pledged to gather a million rosaries to send to countries in the former USSR—and managed to collect that enormous number in less than a year. But mostly his last decades were a series of attempts to recapture the magic: constant pleas for funding and repeated pitches to different studios and networks as Fr. Peyton tried to continue his role as the Rosary Priest. Eventually, he realized that his work would die with him if he did not figure out a way to restructure the organizations he founded and train men to take his place, so he did just that, finally willing to let go of control of the work that had brought him so far.

Eventually, his many years of overwork caught up to him and Fr. Patrick Peyton died in 1992 at the age of seventy-three. His last words, there in the home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, were, “Mary, my queen, my mother.” He had spoken to millions, been lauded by popes and presidents, and changed the face of Catholic media forever. But in that moment, he was not a spiritual giant or a demanding and difficult man; he was the son of a Mother whom he had given his life to serve.

Fr. Patrick Peyton was a difficult man to work with. Despite the shocking amount of money that he was responsible for, he was not much of a businessman either. He was stubborn. Some might even say obsessed. He was also humble and holy and—when the chips were down—obedient. He chose faithfulness over fame and success. And that is what may one day win him the title of Saint: not that he brought millions to Jesus but that he chose Jesus over those millions. In the end, the Rosary Priest just wanted to hold the hand of the Blessed Mother and go home to the Lord he had served so well—and sometimes so poorly—all his life.



Father Patrick Peyton

Meg Hunter-Kilmer

Meg Hunter-Kilmer is a hobo for Christ and a Fellow of the Sullivan Family Saints Initiative in the McGrath Institute for Church Life. She lives out of her car and travels the country speaking to youth and adults, giving retreats, and writing about the saints.

REVELATION



JOHN THE DIVINE ... Greg Tricker

The strangest book in the new Testament is the one in which the gospel story finds its climax. It is known either as Revelation or 'Apocalypse' and it describes itself as the revelation God gave to Jesus Christ that he might show his servants what might happen very soon. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John. This is the John we call John the Divine. John who understood the mysteries of the Divine Will, and mysteries indeed they are. He tells us that he has been exiled to the island of Patmos and that one Sunday, he was caught up in the spirit of the Lord and heard a loud voice like the sound of trumpets. This was the voice of an angel telling John to write on a scroll the visions that would appear before him, and send his message to seven specific churches. We then embark on a kaleidoscope of imagery, the precise meaning of which is often open to the reader's own interpretation.

Prominent among these images are the seven lamps stands of gold of which Tricker shows us one, it's candles all ablaze. Dominating the picture is the head of the mystical angel blowing the summoning trumpet, in a whirl of stars and celestial phenomena. But, all these mystical goings-on are directed to the simple human being who occupies the centre of the picture. John has a large and pensive countenance. Tricker imagines him quite precisely with his bald head and curling sideburns, a dark and fluffy beard emphasizing the firmness of his lips. His head is to one side, he is listening most intently. Already he has taken up his quill and prepared his scrolls. He is there solely as secretary. His function at the moment is not to preach the Word of God but to listen to it and transcribe it for others. Through the stone arch of his little window, we see the boat on which he escaped to Patmos. Tricker engenders an inescapable sense of holy imprisonment. John is not free to sail away: his task confines him to this one spot where God has been waiting to announce his Revelation.



I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. (Revelation 22:16)

The other title 'Apocalypse' refers to the dramatic quality of that revelation. St John and his first readers may have taken its prophecies as being of contemporary relevance, but they are for all times both relevant in their significance and symbolic in their detail. In other words, the strange events that John will see in vision, will not happen literally or immediately, because God's 'very soon' is timeless. It is a book of warning against the dangers that threaten all who take the Christ journey, though it draws its seeming realism from the political events of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Tricker is wholly uninterested in political events. His focus is on the act of listening to God, of accepting the Divine message and all its power.

There are heavenly trumpets to be heard and heavenly lights to be seen, if only we are faithful. Perhaps, as an artist, Tricker feels a kinship with a man who is called to share his vision. The angel did not speak to John for himself, but for the whole waiting world that needs to come closer to God. John lives in his listening faith and in his writing hand content to be enclosed in his small stone house. He is called to live out the attentiveness of prayer, and the selfless devotion that transmitting the message of that prayer demands of him.

Simone Weil, that great French mystic, wrote in a book entitled '*Attente au Dieu*', and even for us who have no visions, whether religious or artistic, Tricker's image gives us a compelling insight into what this attentiveness means.



Sister Wendy Beckett

St. Tarasius



Feastday: February 25

Saint Tarasios (or Saint Tarasius) was born and raised in the city of **Constantinople**. A son of a high-ranking judge, Tarasios was related to

important families, including that of the later **Patriarch Photios the Great**. St. Tarasius was subject of the **Byzantine Empire**. He was raised to the highest honors in the Empire as Consul, and later became first secretary to the Emperor Constantine and his mother, Irene.

Since he exhibited both Iconodule sympathies and the willingness to follow imperial commands when they were not contrary to the faith, he was selected as Patriarch of Constantinople by the **Empress Irene** in 784, even though he was a layman at the time. Nevertheless, like all educated Byzantines, he was well versed in theology, and the election of qualified laymen as bishops was not unheard of in the history of the Church.

He reluctantly accepted, on condition that church unity would be restored with Rome and the oriental Patriarchs. To make him eligible for the office of patriarch, Tarasios was duly ordained to the diaconate and then the priesthood, prior to his consecration as bishop.

When being elected Patriarch of Constantinople, he consented to accept the dignity offered to him only on condition that a General Council should be summoned to resolve the disputes concerning the veneration of sacred images, for Constantinople had been separated from the Holy See on account of the war between the Emperors.

The Council was held in the **Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople** in 786; it met again the following year at Nice and its decrees were approved by the Pope. The holy Patriarch incurred the enmity of the Emperor by his persistent refusal to sanction his divorce from his lawful wife. He witnessed the death of Constantine, which was occasioned by his own mother; he beheld the reign and the downfall of Irene and usurpation of Nicephorus.

St. Tarasius' whole life in the **Episcopacy** was one of penance and prayer, and of hard labor to reform his clergy and people. He occupied the See of Constantinople twenty-one years and two months. His charity toward the poor was one of the characteristic virtues of his life. He visited in person, all the houses and hospitals in Constantinople, so that no indigent person might be overlooked in the distribution of alms. This saintly Bishop was called to his eternal reward in the year 806. His feast day is February 25th.

Pope Francis offers a “worksheet” for Lent: Check it out!



AFP PHOTO / OSSERVATORE ROMANO

Cardinal Jozef Tomko (L) making the sign of the cross with ashes on the forehead of Pope Francis during the Ash Wednesday mass opening Lent in 2017

Using the key words "pause, see, and return," pontiff recommends some concrete resolutions

Need some direction for your Lenten resolutions? Pope Francis is offering it in three words: Pause, See and Return.

Here is his homily from today's Mass with the imposition of ashes:

The season of Lent is a favourable time to remedy the dissonant chords of our Christian life and to receive the ever new, joyful and hope-filled proclamation of the Lord's Passover. The Church in her maternal wisdom invites us to pay

special attention to anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart.

We are subject to numerous temptations. Each of us knows the difficulties we have to face. And it is sad to note that, when faced with the ever-varying circumstances of our daily lives, there are voices raised that take advantage of pain and uncertainty; the only thing they aim to do is sow distrust. If the fruit of faith is charity – as Mother Teresa often used to say – then the fruit of distrust is apathy and resignation. Distrust, apathy and resignation: these are demons that deaden and paralyze the soul of a believing people.

Lent is the ideal time to unmask these and other temptations, to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus. The whole of the Lenten season is imbued with this conviction, which we could say is echoed by three words offered to us in order to rekindle the heart of the believer: pause, see and return.

***Pause* a little, leave behind the unrest and commotion that fill the soul with bitter feelings which never get us anywhere. Pause from this compulsion to a fast-paced life that scatters, divides and ultimately destroys time with family, with friends, with children, with grandparents, and time as a gift... time with God.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from the need to show off and be seen by all, to continually appear on the “noticeboard” that makes us forget the value of intimacy and recollection.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from haughty looks, from fleeting and pejorative comments that arise from forgetting tenderness, compassion and reverence for the encounter with others, particularly those who are vulnerable, hurt and even immersed in sin and error.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from the urge to want to control everything, know everything, destroy everything; this comes from overlooking gratitude for the gift of life and all the good we receive.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from the deafening noise that weakens and confuses our hearing, that makes us forget the fruitful and creative power of silence.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from the attitude which promotes sterile and unproductive thoughts that arise from isolation and self-pity, and that cause us to forget going out to encounter others to share their burdens and suffering.**

***Pause* for a little while, refrain from the emptiness of everything that is instantaneous, momentary and fleeting, that deprives us of our roots, our ties, of the value of continuity and the awareness of our ongoing journey.**

***Pause* in order to look and contemplate!**

See the gestures that prevent the extinguishing of charity, that keep the flame of faith and hope alive. Look at faces alive with God's tenderness and goodness working in our midst.

See the face of our families who continue striving, day by day, with great effort, in order to move forward in life, and who, despite many concerns and much hardship, are committed to making their homes a school of love.

See the faces of our children and young people filled with yearning for the future and hope, filled with "tomorrows" and opportunities that demand dedication and protection. Living shoots of love and life that always open up a path in the midst of our selfish and meagre calculations.

See our elderly whose faces are marked by the passage of time, faces that reveal the living memory of our people. Faces that reflect God's wisdom at work.

See the faces of our sick people and the many who take care of them; faces which in their vulnerability and service remind us that the value of each person can never be reduced to a question of calculation or utility.

See the remorseful faces of so many who try to repair their errors and mistakes, and who from their misfortune and suffering fight to transform their situations and move forward.

See and contemplate the face of Crucified Love, who today from the cross continues to bring us hope, his hand held out to those who feel crucified, who experience in their lives the burden of failure, disappointment and heartbreak.

See and contemplate the real face of Christ crucified out of love for everyone, without exception. For everyone? Yes, for everyone. To see his face is an invitation filled with hope for this Lenten time, in order to defeat the demons of distrust, apathy and resignation. The face that invites us to cry out: “The Kingdom of God is possible!”

Pause, see and return. Return to the house of your Father. Return without fear to those outstretched, eager arms of your Father, who is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4), who awaits you.

Return without fear, for this is the favourable time to come home, to the home of my Father and your Father (cf. Jn 20:17). It is the time for allowing one’s heart to be touched... Persisting on the path of evil only gives rise to disappointment and sadness. True life is something quite distinct and our heart indeed knows this. God does not tire, nor will he tire, of holding out his hand (cf. Misericordiae Vultus, 19).

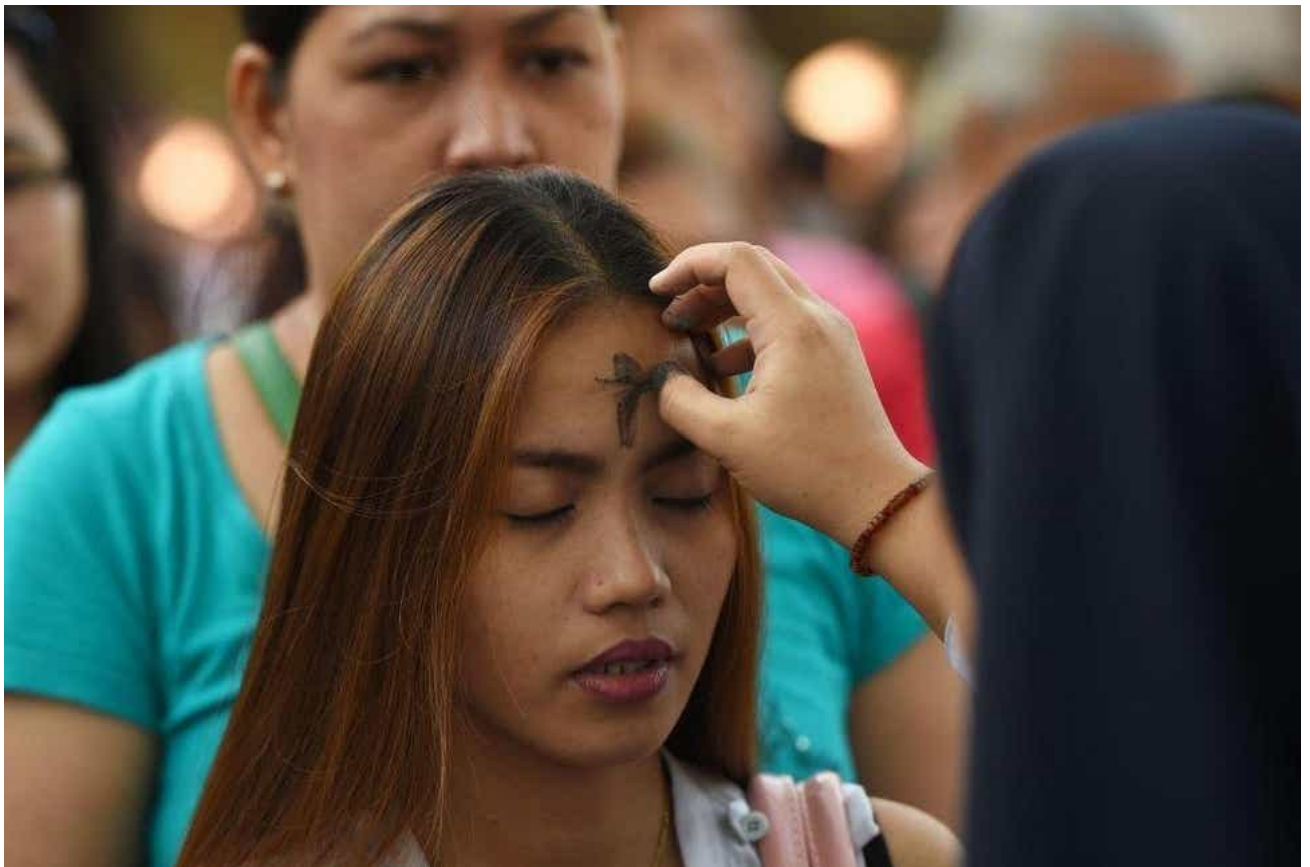
Return without fear, to join in the celebration of those who are forgiven.

Return without fear, to experience the healing and reconciling tenderness of God. Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36: 26).

Pause, see and return!

Ash Wednesday 2023: What's the history of the day and how is it observed in Christianity?

Are you giving up anything for Lent this year?



If you are giving up something for Lent, then you need to know about Ash Wednesday - the day that marks the official beginning of this repentant period in the Christian calendar.

Ash Wednesday is observed by many sectors of Western Christianity - including Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Methodists - and the traditions associated with the day span back centuries.

Here we explain everything that you need to know about Ash Wednesday.



Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent / Pixabay

What date is Ash Wednesday?

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 22.

It always occurs 46 days before Easter Sunday, which marks the end of Lent. Because Easter is a moveable feast, the date of Ash Wednesday also shifts annually.

Easter Sunday itself falls on the Sunday following the first full moon after Spring Equinox, which this year will fall on April 9.

Ash Wednesday, on the other hand, always falls on the day immediately following Shrove Tuesday - or Pancake Day, as it is more commonly known.

What is the history of the day?

While Shrove Tuesday entails the eating up of rich foods - like sugar, eggs and butter - in time for Lent, Ash Wednesday marks the official beginning of this 40-day period of abstinence.

Christians traditionally abstain from foods such as meat and dairy over Lent, although this has now extended into people giving up some of their favourite things, like chocolate, or trying to give up bad habits.

These sacrifices are meant to reflect the 40 days and 40 nights that Jesus spent fasting in the Judean Desert, according to the Bible.

How is it marked in Christianity?



Christians often have ash crosses drawn on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday. Sometimes ash is also sprinkled over their heads during church services, but both practises are a sign of repentance.

The ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made up of the palm leaves used in the previous year's Palm Sunday service.

Palm Sunday itself is celebrated on the Sunday before Easter, and commemorates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem before his crucifixion. Palm leaves are used in the service because it is claimed that people laid palm branches on the ground in front of Jesus as he rode into the city.

The ash used on Ash Wednesday is made by burning these palm leaves and mixing them with either Holy Water or olive oil.

The mixture is then painted onto the heads of worshippers whilst a member of the clergy says either: "Remember that you are guest, and to dust you shall return", or "Repent and believe in the gospel".

These words are based on those spoken to Adam and Eve in the Bible after their sin and, as such, the ritual is intended to remind worshippers of their sinfulness whilst acting as a sign of repentance ahead of Lent.

The Disappearing Hospital Chapels

Many Revamping Into Multi-faith Meditation Rooms

Fr James Mulligan

The symbiosis between faith and healing has been underlined since the very beginnings of the concept of 'hospital' in Britain. For example, St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, dating from 1123 and perhaps the most ancient hospital in the country, actually owes its foundation to healing of a monk named Rahere who fell gravely ill on a pilgrimage to Rome in the 12th century. Rahere, in the extremity of his illness, apparently experienced a vision of the Apostle Bartholomew who requested him to have a hospital built at Smithfield in London. Healed and well again Rahere, on his return to London, followed the heavenly injunction and St Bart's was founded and is unique in that among the many hospitals in London it has never changed site.

Medieval Britain gradually became dotted with hospitals - actually extensions of religious houses which offered food to the starving and a quiet place for dying. Medical treatment was secured at the price of accepting the rites of the Church. Indeed the fourth Lateran council of 1215 threatened excommunication to any medical practitioners who ministered to the sick who had not been confessed and shriven of sin. Prayer was central to the treatment of illness throughout the Middle Ages in Britain. Carole Rawcliffe in her work, *Medicine for the Soul: The Life, Death and Resurrection of an English Medieval Hospital* (Sutton Publishing 1999), has uncovered how huge the role prayer and religious meditation was thought to play in the healing process and how at St Giles' hospital in Norwich, for example, there was an elaborate healing prayer ritual based on the five wounds of Christ.

As the concept of hospital developed in Britain the need to provide the sick at these institutions with access to a chapel became paramount and by the time that Henry VII ordered the building of a state-of-the-art hospital at the Savoy off The Strand in London (constructed 1490-1519) three chapels were incorporated into the vast structure. One of the chapels, dedicated to St John the Baptist, is the only part of the building to survive and is today the property of the monarch as part of the Duchy of Lancaster.

By the time of the Reformation a quite well-defined hospital structure, invariably under the auspices of the Church, was established. The Reformation changed everything, with many of the religious houses which had provided care for the sick either demolished or converted to secular usage. With the Church no longer involved and the state uninterested something of a crisis in healthcare arose

and to meet this need by the late 17th century and early 18th century, particularly in London, the age of the private citizen hospital benefactor began. Guy's Hospital for example, was founded in 1721 by Thomas Guy (1644 - 1724), a printer and publisher of unlicensed Bibles. It was originally established as a hospital to treat "incurables" discharged from St Thomas' Hospital. Guy had been a Governor and benefactor of St Thomas', a hospital having its foundation in the monasteries. The large chapel was and is a very important feature of Guy's Hospital's architecture. With its balconies on three sides supported by wooden Ionic capitals the chapel still retains its original pews and on each side wall are beautiful terracotta panels depicting Our Lady, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Phoebe.

Another famous hospital founded at this time by private initiative was the Royal London Hospital at Whitechapel on the eastern outskirts of the city. The establishment of the London was the result of the passionate dedication of individual physicians supported by wealthy patrons who saw this as their Christian duty. A huge chapel was central in the hospital building.

The 19th century and early 20th century saw an expansion in the building of large hospitals and in London the major hospitals, The Middlesex, the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, St Mary's Paddington, the revamped Royal London Hospital, Kings College Hospital, University College Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children were established. All had impressive hospital chapels and some, such as Great Ormond Street, a quite magnificent chapel. This chapel provision continued through until the late 20th century with the modernist chapel of Charing Cross Hospital in Hammersmith in London a good example of tradition being maintained but adapted to current tastes and needs. Hexagonal in shape with a recessed sanctuary the vault is supported elegant stone ribs and important features of the chapel are four rich and striking stained glass windows – two by Alfred Fisher and two by John Piper.

In the last twenty-five years or so things have changed dramatically in the provision of hospital chapels. With the multi-faith composition of today's society it is inevitable, and quite correct, that this is catered for in the provision of prayer facilities in our hospitals. However this does not have to be at the expense of the hospital chapels disappearing, and there is certainly a whiff of political correctness and indeed secularism in the manner in which insipid, featureless multi-faith meditation rooms are replacing hospital chapels. This faith room move in hospital provision is a very good example of setting out to accommodate and please all and ending up pleasing nobody.

Perhaps the fate of the chapel in the Royal London Hospital illustrates the journey on which many of our hospital chapels are heading. The first chapel at the Royal London (founded in the 1740s) was central to the original plan of the building and could accommodate a congregation of five hundred. Over time the chapel facilities

were moved to more modest premises in what had been surgeons' rooms and the 'bleeding room'. Sadly January 2012 has seen the end of the chapel in the London with the movement into a new hospital block and the provision of a small, windowless, featureless faith room or sanctuary.

The traditional hospital chapels are much loved by the public and their disappearance will be regretted by so many.

Marina Gray's son Daniel suffered an extremely serious head injury in a road accident in January 2011 and for some weeks his life was in the balance. Mrs Gray says that she will never be able to satisfactorily express her gratitude to the medical staff on the Intensive Care Unit at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington who saved Daniel's life and sent him on the road to a spectacular recovery. She also gets positively emotional about the role St Mary's Hospital chapel played for her and her family in those traumatic weeks while Daniel was in a coma.

"While Daniel was in a critical condition in St Mary's hospital the chapel there became a second home for myself and my family. This beautiful chapel provided us with a place of peace and security. We attended the Sunday and weekday Masses and entered our prayers for Daniel in the 'intercessions' prayer book. We were there early in the morning. We were there at midnight. And whenever we visited there were also present patients, patients' relatives or hospital staff. The prayerful atmosphere in that chapel helped us so much. When my mother was dying I visited the prayer room or sanctuary in the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead. I hope I don't sound harsh but I have to say that the atmosphere was just not the same at all.

We returned at Christmas to see the newly painted chapel in St Mary's. It looks wonderful. Long may it be there."

Sources:

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The refurbished chapel at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, London