

19 March

Joseph of Nazareth

God our Father, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph the carpenter to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary: give us grace to follow him in faithful obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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19 March

Joseph of Nazareth

In the gospel of Matthew, Joseph is depicted as a good man, a working carpenter, who trusted in God. He received God's messenger who shared with him God's will for him and for Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married. Luke's gospel describes how Joseph took the new-born child as if he were his own. He was with Mary when, on the fortieth day after the birth, Jesus was presented in the Temple, 'where every first-born male is designated as holy to the Lord'. The adoption of Jesus by Joseph also established Jesus in the descent of David, to accord with the prophecy that Israel's deliverer would be of the House and lineage of David.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'

20 March

**Cuthbert
Bishop of Lindisfarne,
Missionary 687**

Almighty God, who called your servant Cuthbert from following the flock to follow your Son and to be a shepherd of your people: in your mercy, grant that we, following his example, may bring those who are lost, home to your fold; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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20 March

**Cuthbert
Bishop of Lindisfarne, Missionary**

Cuthbert was probably born in the Scottish lowlands around the year 640. At the age of eight a prophetic remark from a playmate turned his mind to sober and godly thoughts and his upbringing as a shepherd gave him ample time for prayer. One night he saw in the sky a dazzling light and angels carry a soul up to heaven, and resolved to dedicate his life to God. Some years later Cuthbert came to Melrose Abbey asking to be admitted as a monk. It was from here that he began his missionary work, which he continued from Lindisfarne when he became Abbot there. Consecrated Bishop in 685, he remained an indefatigable traveller and preacher, walking all over his diocese, and spending time as a hermit on Farne Island in between. After only a year, however, he felt his end coming and resigned his office, dying on Farne in the company of a few of his monks.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'

21 March

Thomas Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury, Reformation Martyr, 1556

Father of all mercies, who through the work of your servant Thomas Cranmer renewed the worship of your Church and through his death revealed your strength in human weakness: by your grace strengthen us to worship you in spirit and in truth and so to come to the joys of your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate.

Amen.

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21 March

Thomas Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury, Reformation Martyr.

Born in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire in 1489, Thomas Cranmer, from an unspectacular Cambridge academic career, was recruited for diplomatic service in 1527. Two years later he joined the team working to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and duly pronounced the Aragon marriage annulled. By now a convinced Church reformer, he married in 1532 while clerical marriage was still illegal in England. He worked closely with Thomas Cromwell to further reformation, but survived Henry's final, unpredictable years to become a chief architect of Edwardian religious change, constructing two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, in 1549 and 1552, the Ordinal in 1550 and the original version of the later Thirty-Nine Articles.

Cranmer acquiesced in the unsuccessful attempt to make Lady Jane Grey Queen of England. Queen Mary's regime convicted him of treason in 1553 and of heresy in 1554. Demoralised by imprisonment, he signed six recantations, but was still condemned to the stake at Oxford. Struggling with his conscience, he made a final, bold statement of Protestant faith. Perhaps too fair-minded and cautious to be a ready-made hero in Reformation disputes, he was an impressively learned scholar, and his genius for formal prose has left a lasting mark on Anglican liturgy. He was burnt at the stake on this day in the year 1556.

Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'