

Despite Parade Cancellations, Christians Worldwide Remember the Life of Saint Patrick

March 17, St. Patrick's Day, is usually filled with parades and celebrations. But for the first time in 258 years, the annual New York St. Patrick's Day Parade has been canceled due to concerns over the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Although St. Patrick's Day has become widely secularized over the centuries, it originally began as a holy day.

"The origin of Saint Patrick's Day would be the death day of the saint. The day of his entry into heaven, his feast day, the festival of that," said Dr. Charles Doherty of University College Dublin.

Feast days were annual celebrations in which Christians remembered their chosen saints.

"It is the liturgical veneration of the death of that person, the memory of what he did," Doherty said. "It's associated with the places that he visited [or] founded, allegedly or otherwise."

Patrick's Feast Day Keeps His Memory Alive

Patrick's feast day was first observed locally by his own followers in Ireland.

"They kept his memory alive. They're the people who preserved his writings. And the one thing any ancient group of Christians [does] about their leader, is they preserve the day of death," explained Thomas O'Loughlin, author of *Discovering Saint Patrick*. "And we can be pretty sure that he died on the 17th of March. And they would have kept that loyally."

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