

around the year

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



THE RETURN OF THE BIRDS

by John Burroughs

AN EXCERPT FROM
WAKE-ROBIN (1871)

Spring in our northern climate may fairly be said to extend from the middle of March to the middle of June. At least, the vernal tide continues to rise until the latter date, and it is not till after the summer solstice that the shoots and twigs begin to harden and turn to wood, or the grass to lose any of its freshness and succulency.

It is this period that marks the return of the birds,—one or two of the more hardy or half-domesticated species, like the song-sparrow and the bluebird, usually arriving in March, while the rarer and more brilliant wood-birds bring up the procession in June.

But each stage of the advancing season gives prominence to certain species, as to certain flowers. The dandelion tells me when to look for the swallow, the dog-toothed violet when to expect the wood-thrush, and when I have found the

From the Editor's Desk

March 2, 2017

Dear Readers:

Here in New England, **March is roaring in like a lion!** We had an early red-wing blackbird arrival, and warm, moist temperatures for days, so I was beginning to worry that we were moving directly from winter into full-blown spring before we even made it to the **Vernal Equinox** (March 20th). But, as it is wont to do, winter decided it was not finished with us yet. I woke in the early hours of the morning to hear the howling of a cold, North-Westerly wind bearing down us, not unlike a lion, actually! The personification of March as a lion is also the theme of one of this month's children's books selections (see page 7).



Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the star of the show in March—the liturgical season of **Lent**, which began yesterday on **Ash Wednesday**.

This period of prayer and introspection in anticipation of Easter is not always easy to explain to children. Visit **AroundtheYear.org/lent** to find two crafts that provide opportunities to help children enter the season of Lent in their own way.

This month we'll also be celebrating the **Feast of St. Patrick** on March 17th. In this newsletter you'll find several Irish blessings (see page 5), and I'll be sharing some tasty Irish recipes on the website later in the month—you'll always get the latest posts and updates when you subscribe via email.

The **Feast of St. Joseph** on March 19th (see page 6) and the **Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary** on March 25th finish off the month on a high note.

Wishing all of you a Holy Lent—I'd love to hear how you're observing this special season, so please share your thoughts at **Facebook.com/AroundtheYear.org**.

Kelli Ann Wilson, Editor
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Coming to *around the year* in April:

Decorating Easter eggs, celebrating St. George's Day, & more!



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wake-robin in bloom I know the season is fairly inaugurated. With me this flower is associated, not merely with the awakening of Robin, for he has been awake some weeks, but with the universal awakening and rehabilitation of nature.

Yet the coming and going of the birds is more or less a mystery and a surprise. We go out in the morning, and no thrush or vireo is to be heard; we go out again, and every tree and grove is musical; yet again, and all is silent. Who saw them come? Who saw them depart?

This pert little winter-wren, for instance, darting in and out the fence, diving under the rubbish here and coming up yards

away,—how does he manage with those little circular wings to compass degrees and zones, and arrive always in the nick of time? Last August I saw him in the remotest wilds of the Adirondacs, impatient and inquisitive as usual; a few weeks later, on the Potomac, I was greeted by the same hardy little busybody. Does he travel by easy stages from bush to bush and from wood to wood? or has that compact little body force and courage to brave the night and the upper air, and so achieve leagues at one pull?

And yonder bluebird with the earth tinge on his breast and the sky tinge on his back,—did he come down out of heaven on that bright March morning when he told us so softly and

plaintively that if we pleased, spring had come? Indeed, there is nothing in the return of the birds more curious and suggestive than in the first appearance, or rumors of the appearance, of this little blue-coat. The bird at first seems a mere wandering voice in the air; one hears its call or carol on some bright March morning, but is uncertain of its source or direction; it falls like a drop of rain when no cloud is visible; one looks and listens, but to no purpose. The weather changes, perhaps a cold snap with snow comes on, and it may be a week before I hear the note again, and this time or the next perchance see the bird sitting on a stake in the fence lifting his wing as he

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calls cheerily to his mate. Its notes now become daily more frequent; the birds multiply, and, flitting from point to point, call and warble more confidently and gleefully. Their boldness increases till one sees them hovering with a saucy, inquiring air about barns and out-buildings, peeping into dove-cotes, and stable windows, inspecting knot-holes and pump-trees, intent only on a place to nest. They wage war against robins and wrens, pick quarrels with swallows, and seem to deliberate for days over the policy of taking forcible possession of one of the mud-houses of the latter. But as the season advances they drift more into the background. Schemes of conquest which they at first seemed bent upon are abandoned, and they settle down very quietly in their old quarters in remote stumpy fields.

Not long after the bluebird comes the robin, sometimes in March, but in most of the Northern States April is the month of the robin. In large numbers they scour the fields

and groves. You hear their piping in the meadow, in the pasture, on the hill-side. Walk in the woods, and the dry leaves rustle with the whirl of their wings, the air is vocal with their cheery call. In excess of joy and vivacity, they run, leap, scream, chase each other through the air, diving and sweeping among the trees with perilous rapidity.

In that free, fascinating, half-work and half-play pursuit,—sugar-making,—a pursuit which still lingers in many parts of New York, as in New England, the robin is one's constant companion. When the day is sunny and the ground bare, you meet him at all points and hear him at all hours. At sunset, on the tops of the tall maples, with look heavenward, and in a spirit of utter abandonment, he carols his simple strain. And sitting thus amid the stark, silent trees, above the wet, cold earth, with the chill of winter still in the air, there is no fitter or sweeter songster in the whole round year. It is in keeping with the scene and the occasion. How round and genuine the

notes are, and how eagerly our ears drink them in! The first utterance, and the spell of winter is thoroughly broken, and the remembrance of it afar off.

Robin is one of the most native and democratic of our birds; he is one of the family, and seems much nearer to us than those rare, exotic visitants, as the orchard starling or rose-breasted grossbeak, with their distant, high-bred ways. Hardy, noisy, frolicsome, neighborly and domestic in his habits, strong of wing and bold in spirit, he is the pioneer of the thrush family, and well worthy of the finer artists whose coming he heralds and in a measure prepares us for.

—J.B.

QUOTE

Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush.

—Doug Larson



Spring

by Gerard Manly Hopkins

Nothing is so beautiful as spring—

When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;

Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;

The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?

A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,

Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,

Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

Some Irish Blessings for St. Patrick's Day

May your blessings outnumber
The shamrocks that grow,
And may trouble avoid you
Wherever you go.

May the Irish hills caress you.
May her lakes and rivers bless you.
May the luck of the Irish enfold you.
May the blessings of Saint Patrick behold you.

May luck be our companion
May friends stand by our side
May history remind us all
Of Ireland's faith and pride.
May God bless us with happiness
May love and faith abide.

May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light,
May good luck pursue you each morning and night.



CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF SAINT JOSEPH

The Feast of **Saint Joseph** is celebrated each year on March 19th. Joseph was the foster father of Jesus Christ, and the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Although the facts concerning Joseph's life are not overwhelming in number, we do know from Scripture that he was a carpenter by trade, and "a righteous man" (Matthew 1:18).

When he discovered that Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant, and knowing he was not the father of the child, he chose not to expose her because he knew that the price of adultery was death. He was determined to send her away to end the matter quietly and spare her life.

However, he was visited by an angel in a dream and he was told:

²⁰Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give

birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:20-21). Joseph obeyed the angel's words and raised Jesus as his own beloved son.

Because he does not feature in the Gospel's depiction of Jesus's ministry and death, scholars conclude that he had most likely died before that time.

Minestrone soup, pasta with breadcrumbs (to represent carpenter's sawdust), and fava beans are all traditionally eaten on St. Joseph's feast day because of their link to a Sicilian drought that was ended through his intercession during the Middle Ages.

St. Joseph is the patron of the Universal Church, unborn children, fathers, workers, travelers, and immigrants. He is also linked to happy family life, married couples, and dying a happy death.

—K.W.

Collect for the Feast of Saint Joseph

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



MARCH 2017

(A) Anglican/Episcopalian; (R)
Roman Catholic

March 1st: ASH WEDNESDAY
(A)(R)

March 5th: First Sunday in Lent

March 7th: Feast of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, patronesses of mothers and children (A)(R)

March 12th: Second Sunday in Lent

March 17th: Feast of St. Patrick, patron of Ireland (A)(R)

March 19th: Third Sunday in Lent and the Feast of St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus Christ, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patron of fathers, workers, and travelers (A)(R)

March 20th: VERNAL EQUINOX

March 25th: FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LORD TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (A)(R)

March 26th: Fourth Sunday in Lent

Visit AroundtheYear.org for more photos, crafts, recipes, and ideas for celebrating the natural seasons and the Christian year.

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I'm always looking for individuals who might be interested in contributing to *around the year* (both the website and the newsletters). If you would like to contribute, please contact me!
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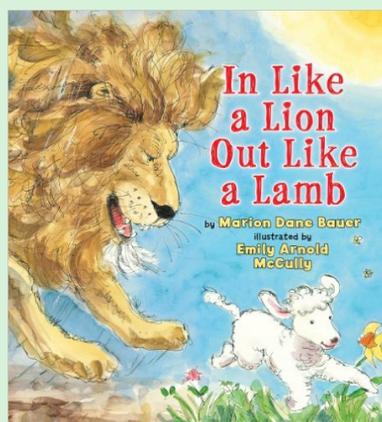


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Recommended Reading

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH



In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb, written by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

From the publisher:

In this exuberant, rhythmic story, March, personified as a lion, enters a boy's cozy home and leaves a trail of snow flurries and muddy footprints. The boy calmly observes the pouncing, howling, growling

lion until in comes the lamb on the crest of a huge sneeze.

Escorted by grass, flowers, sunshine, showers, and animal babies, the lamb brings forth spring.

Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato, written and illustrated by Tomie dePaola

From the publisher:

When his wife injures her back and can't do all the work, Jamie O'Rourke—the laziest man in all of Ireland—is sure he'll starve to death. A wiley leprechaun intervenes, and one wish later, Jamie is the proud owner of a potato as big as a house! An engaging read-aloud choice for St. Patrick's Day.

