

Today is Þorláksmessa, the feast of the patron saint of Iceland

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Dec. 23, 2009 NCR Today

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Expected of the nations and their Savior. Come and save us, O Lord our God.

--[Antiphon for Vespers, Dec. 23](#) [1]

Today is Þorláksmessa, the feast of the patron saint of Iceland, Þorlákr Þórhallsson (Thorlac Thorhallsson).

Please click [here](#) [2] for pictures of Icelanders enjoying skate, the traditional and "odiferous" fish eaten on Þorláksmessa.

"It is considered the last day of preparations before Christmas. Therefore, on St. Thorlac's Day, the house is cleaned and preparations for the Christmas meal are begun. Most people in Reykjav'k go into town in the night to meet others and do the last shopping before Christmas. Fish is usually eaten on Þorláksmessa since December 23 is the last day of the Catholic Christmas fast. In western Iceland, it is customary to eat cured skate on this day; this custom spread to the whole of Iceland. The skate is usually served with boiled or mashed potatoes, accompanied by a shot of Brenniv'n, the Icelandic schnapps."

"Thorlac died on 23rd December 1193. Five years after his death, the Althing - a mixture of a parliament and church synod - proclaimed him a saint. In 1984 Pope John Paul confirmed this and declared him patron of Iceland."

--from [Catholic Ireland](#) [3]

For a charming introduction to "the sort of light-hearted, one might even say trivial, miracles" Bishop Þorlákr performs for those who invoke him and the vows they make in return, click [here](#). [4] (Scroll down to page 240/38.)

For details on St. Thorlac's life and cult see [Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia](#), [5] by Thomas Du Bois.

Ásd's Egilsdóttir's new edition of the [Þorláks Saga Helga](#), [6] was published in 1989, to coincide with [7] http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1989/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19890603_arrivo-islanda_en.html>

Pope John Paul II's visit to Iceland.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/20/2017 - 12:20): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/today-%EF%AC%81orl%C2%B7ksmessa-feast-patron-saint-iceland>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWGM9bJR2Cs>
- [2] <http://jol.ismennt.is/english/thorlaxsmessa-joe.htm>
- [3] <http://www.catholicireland.net/church-a-bible/church/november-saints/1558-20-st-thorlac-of-skalholt-1133-93-patron-of-iceland>
- [4] http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/1996_XXIV_4.pdf
- [5] http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/080209130X/ref=ord_cart_shr?_encoding=UTF8∓v=glance
- [6] http://www.bokin.is/product_info.php?cPath=362&products_id=5779
- [7] <https://www.ncronline.org/%26lt%3Bbr>