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Russia's Orthodox Church Will Henceforth Celebrate St. Patrick's Day

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People attend a St. Patrick's Day Parade in Moscow, Sunday, March 22, 2009. **AP Photo / Sergey Ponomarev**

The patron saint of Ireland has finally won over the Russian Orthodox Church, which declared on Thursday that it shall henceforth celebrate St. Patrick's Day, albeit on March 30, almost two weeks after the carousing has wrapped up to the west.

"In total, we added to the ecclesiastical calendar more than a dozen saints who struggled bravely in Western countries, including holy Patriky, the Apostle of Ireland, better known among the faithful of our country as St. Patrick," Vladimir Legoida, a spokesman for the church, told the news agency Interfax.

According to Legoida, the new calendar was formulated based in part on the accounts of Russian Orthodox Christians worshipping in dioceses located in Western Europe. Church officials weighed this information, as well as the absence of particular saints' name in polemical works criticizing Eastern Christianity, Legoida told Interfax.

The Russian Orthodox Church is celebrating St. Patrick's Day almost two weeks after the rest of Christendom because the church observes the Julian calendar, which is 13 days behind the now-standard Gregorian calendar.

While this year will make the first time Russian Orthodox Christianity has officially honored St. Patrick's Day, cities across Russia have held annual holiday festivities for years already. These celebrations are likely to remain in mid-March, alongside the party in Ireland.

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