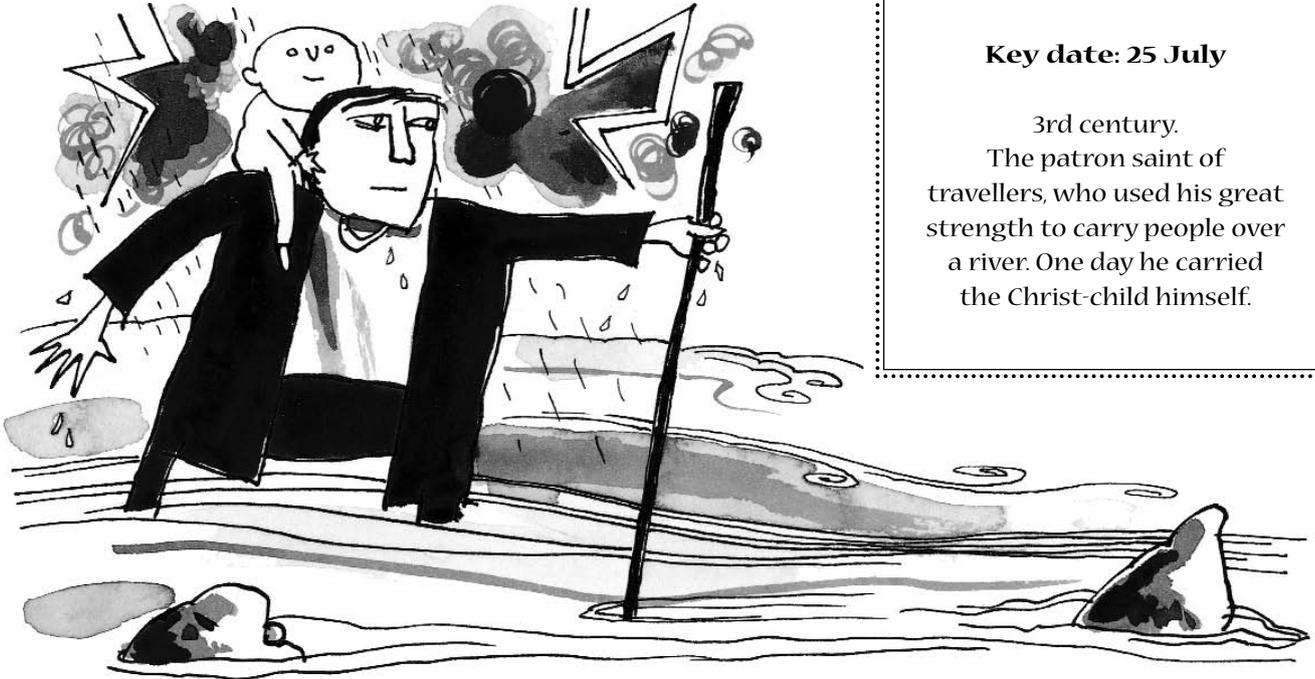


St Christopher



Key date: 25 July

3rd century.

The patron saint of travellers, who used his great strength to carry people over a river. One day he carried the Christ-child himself.



**Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
soul, and strength.**

DEUTERONOMY 6:5

The strong man

Do you admire strong people?

This story is about a big, strong man who loved Jesus. He wasn't clever. He couldn't read or write or do sums. He desperately wanted to serve Jesus, but he didn't know how.

He lived near a wide, shallow river. There was no bridge over the river, or even a boat to ferry people across. If they wanted to go from one side to the other, they had to wade through, and sometimes they fell in!

So this man had an idea. He would use his great strength to serve others by carrying them across the river. He built himself a hut on the bank and soon he was a familiar sight, wading through the water, carrying people on his back.

One dark and stormy night, the river ran dangerously fast. The man was just thinking how glad he was that no one would need him when there came a knock on the door. A child stood there.

'Will you carry me over the water?'

With a sigh, the man took his staff in his hand, bent down to let the child climb on his back and waded into the river.

At first the child was light and all the man had to struggle with was the rush of the water and the thrashing of the wind and rain. But halfway across, the child grew heavier... and heavier... until it was all the man could do to stagger to the far bank and set his burden down.

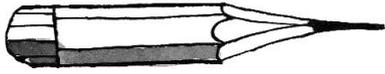
'You are the heaviest weight I have ever carried,' he said.

The child replied, 'That is because I bear the sins of the world. Since you have looked after the weak and carried the Christ-child on your back, you shall now be called Christ-bearer, or Christopher.'

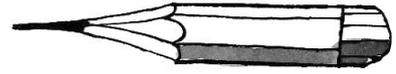
That is why Christopher is the special saint for travellers.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, let me use whatever gifts you have given me, to serve you.



Suggested activities



Stepping stones

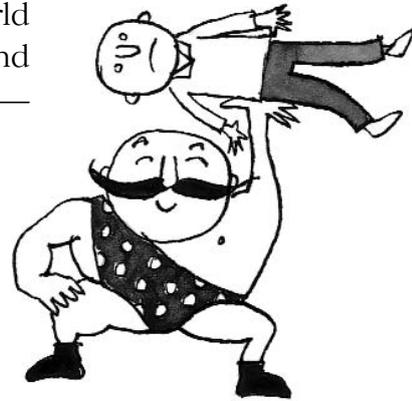
FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

This is a variant of musical chairs. Supply as many sheets of newspaper as there are children, minus one. The floor is now a river, and the children can only cross it on the paper 'stones'. Only one child can safely stand on each piece of paper at a time. Play some music and, when it stops, the children must find themselves a new piece of paper. One child will be left out. Remove one or two pieces of paper until there is only one piece left.

The strongest man in the world

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

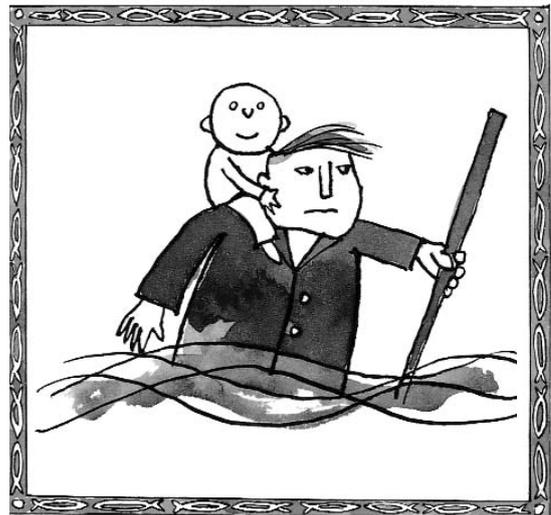
Do you know the name of the strongest man in the world today? How much can he lift at any one time? You can find out who he is by looking in the *Guinness Book of Records*—there should be a copy in your local library.



Tug-of-war

This is a playground activity which must be properly supervised. A rope needs to be supplied, and care taken that the two sides are roughly equal in strength. Have a tug-of-war: which side is the stronger?

Symbol



How do you cross the river?

Draw a river and some people standing on the bank. There is no bridge. Draw at least two ways in which they might cross the river without building a bridge.

Here are some ideas to start you off: stepping stones, a ford, riding a horse, swinging across on a rope, by boat, chain-ferry or helicopter.



Suggested songs

My God is so big (JP169; K255)
My God is so great (C169)