



March 31

Commemoration: John Donne poet, 1631

John Donne (1572 (between 24 January and 19 June) – 31 March 1631), an English poet, satirist, lawyer, and priest, is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets. His works are noted for their strong, sensual style and include sonnets, love poetry, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires, and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphor, especially as compared to that of his contemporaries. Donne's style is characterized by abrupt openings and various paradoxes, ironies, and dislocations. These features, along with his frequent dramatic or everyday speech rhythms, his tense syntax, and his tough eloquence, were both a reaction against the smoothness of conventional Elizabethan poetry and an adaptation into English of European baroque and mannerist techniques. His early career was marked by poetry that bore immense knowledge of British society, and he met that knowledge with sharp criticism. Another important theme in Donne's poetry is the idea of true religion, something that he spent much time considering and theorizing about. He wrote secular

poems and erotic poems and love poems. Donne is particularly famous for his mastery of metaphysical conceits.

Despite his great education and poetic talents, he lived in poverty for several years, relying heavily on wealthy friends. He spent much of the money he inherited during and after his education on womanizing, literature, pastimes, and travel. In 1601, Donne secretly married Anne Moore, with whom he had twelve children. In 1615, he became an Anglican priest, although he did not want to take Anglican orders. He did so because King James I persistently ordered it. In 1621, he was appointed the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London. He also served as a member of parliament in 1601 and in 1614.

Painting: After a miniature by Isaac Oliver, 1616

