

## The Story of the Prayer of Saint Patrick

Patrick was born:  
in 385 AD  
to a wealthy family  
... *in Britannia (OR Britain)*  
... *enjoying the pleasures of life as a pampered aristocrat*

But at 16 years of age, he was:  
captured by barbarians  
taken to another land (Ireland) AND  
... *forced into cruel slavery*

At that time, Ireland was an alien world of:  
gods and goddesses  
magical practices  
witchcraft  
sorcery AND  
... *evil spells*

In his turmoil in this dark land, young Patrick:  
began to turn to The God  
he had willingly neglected  
... *as a youth*

After a few years of slavery:  
one night  
Patrick heard a Voice that told him  
... *"soon you will go back to your own country."*

A few nights later:  
another voice  
that said  
... *"Your ship is ready."*

The very next morning, Patrick:  
ran away from his master  
walked 200 miles to shoreline AND  
... *found a ship bound for Britain*

His family was overjoyed to see him, BUT HE WAS:  
different!  
new man!  
Christian! AND  
... *served God in every way he could*

Then Patrick had ANOTHER dream – a dream:  
of Irish people  
pleading desperately

*... for someone to come AND  
... preach the Gospel of Christ to them*

It broke his heart and he began preparation

When he was fully prepared for missionary work:  
his name was always passed over  
by the Church Authorities  
*... but finally at age of 47  
... he was sent as a missionary  
... to Ireland*

With 25 men under his charge – he went to Ireland  
And Ireland would never be the same again!

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing Patrick did:  
was get the King of Ireland's attention  
by breaking one of the sacred laws of Irish paganism  
*... Patrick built a massive fire  
... on the wrong hill  
... at the wrong time  
... NEAR the King's palace*

The King immediately summoned Patrick to the Palace.  
Patrick didn't know if:  
he would live OR  
he would die  
*... BUT HE WOULD PREACH TO THE KING*

And on his journey:  
to the Palace  
Patrick and his followers  
*... sang and chanted this hymn*

“Who was this man Patrick, and what were his great accomplishments that so many should celebrate him more than 1500 years after he left this earth? Like St. Nicholas, whose identity has been utterly changed into that of a child's Christmas fantasy, the name of St. Patrick is now more generally associated with parades, "Kiss Me I'm Irish" buttons and green bagels than with the great work of evangelization that was his life's work. But Patrick was, as Nicholas, a real person.

Many details about Patrick are lost to us, but there is agreement on several key facts. Patrick was not Irish; he was born on the island of Britain possibly to a Roman family in about the year 387 AD. Raised in relative comfort, his name in Latin was Patricius. At the age of 16 years, he was kidnapped by a party of marauding Irish raiders, carried to Ireland, and sold into slavery. He was sent by his Irish master to tend sheep on the misty hills of Ulster. Miserable and alone, he turned increasingly to prayer. He served this solitary exile for six years until in a dream God told him to flee from his captivity. Walking a great distance to the coast, he found the ship that would take him back to his family.

The reunion with his family was only temporary. In another dream, he described hearing a call from the people of Ireland to come back to them and walk among them. Patrick understood this as God's call to missionary service to go as a Christian witness to the Irish. In answer to that call, he traveled to France where he undertook studies for the priesthood. He was eventually ordained by St. Germanus, the Bishop of Auxerre.

Pope Celestine I eventually entrusted to Patrick the mission of evangelizing the Irish, who, on their isolated island, were a pagan and warlike people having never been conquered by the legions of Rome. Fulfilling his youthful dream, Patrick, now a bishop in the company of several disciples, returned to Ireland in March of the year 433 AD. He was almost 50 years old.

Not a great deal is known of Patrick's preaching, but he and his companions were certainly fearless to approach such a fierce, unfriendly population with faith their only protection. However, one story endures. It is that of his use of the simple three-leafed Irish shamrock to illustrate to the high king at the capital at Tara the nature of the Blessed Trinity - Three Persons in One God. It is significant that the shamrock, the metaphor for God Himself, has come down through the centuries as the symbol of the Irish people.

Thomas Cahill, author of "How the Irish Saved Civilization," points out that one of the most remarkable things about St. Patrick's evangelization of Ireland is that it was peaceful. Christianity had come to many other nations in Europe at the point of a sword, only in the bloody aftermath of Roman conquest. Not so Ireland. In those other cases, the conquered nations had accepted Christianity. But in this case, Christianity had accepted Ireland. The evangelizing work of Patrick and those who helped him and came after him was completely successful.

Another of Cahill's observations is that this universal conversion fortuitously came just in time for Christian Ireland to become the repository for almost 200 years of the culture and civilization of Christian Europe, which at that very time was falling into the shadows of barbarian invasion. In due course, Christian missionaries came out of Ireland bringing back to Europe that which had lain beyond the reach of the invaders who had destroyed the Roman Empire. It is not by accident that Ireland has been called the Isle of Saints and Scholars.

From the days of St. Patrick, who died on March 17, 461, down to the present, the Irish have been steadfast in their Christian faith. As a nation, they have suffered much through the centuries. Perhaps the greatest sorrow is that so many have been forced to wander far from the island to which Patrick came to bring them spiritual life. It is not surprising then that when the sons and daughters of Ireland celebrate who they are they do so on the feast of their great spiritual benefactor.”

- Kate O'Beirne