



The Adventures of Saint Patrick



Beyond the celebration of spring green, most people know little of the life and legacy of St. Patrick – yet his story is one of the most remarkable in history.

Patrick's **incredible influence** gained him the title *Apostle of Ireland*, and respect from all branches of Christianity. **Intrepid, insightful, innovative, and intimate** also describe him. And although a "saint," he was an ordinary person whose life and words encourage us today.

Let's look at Patrick's life and ask ourselves:

***Would we return to help those who abused us?
How can one person change the outlook of a nation?***

It was a long time ago, but Patrick's own writings tell us much of his story. He was born in Britain in the late fourth century. At the age of 16 he was kidnapped by pirates and **sold as a slave** to a Druid high priest in Ireland. While tending sheep on a hill in County Antrim, he suffered greatly from mistreatment.

Patrick came from a nominal Christian background and was not religious. Yet, as with many of us, adversity made him think about God. No doubt the Druid beliefs around him contrasted with what he had heard as a child. So, through suffering, thought and prayer, Patrick became a true believer in the Christian faith while in a land of pagans.

After six years of slavery, believing a voice from God had directed him, **he escaped** from Ireland. His journey home was marked by additional adversity and adventure. It also brought the opportunity to study in France. There, he had a profound vision in which the Irish people asked, "Holy servant boy, we appeal to you to come and walk among us."

INTREPID: Obedient to his vision, **Patrick returned** to the nation which had enslaved and abused him, bringing them the message of love, forgiveness and eternal life. Rather than welcome however, he faced plots and persecutions. He refused support from kings, and so had no royal protection. Patrick was beaten, robbed, captured and enchained.

INFLUENTIAL: *How did Patrick, the outcast former slave change Ireland?*

Slavery had brought him at least three advantages: **language, culture, and faith**. These gave him courage. His courage grew into a boldness which ushered in the golden age of Celtic culture: the culture, experts say, that probably saved Western Civilization during its Dark Ages.

INSIGHTFUL: At the time of Patrick, Ireland was impressed with **the power and beauty of nature**, and worshiped it. The historian Tirechan recorded this example of how **Patrick connected with Irish thinking**, using nature itself to explain God:

One day, **King Loigaire's daughters** came upon Patrick while he and his companions were resting near water. Eithne and her sister began to ask questions of the strangers, including about their God.

"Who is God?" they asked, "... and where is God and where is his dwelling?... Has your God sons and daughters?... Is he in heaven or on earth? In the seas, in the rivers, in the mountains, in the valleys?"

Surrounded by the beauties of nature, Patrick poetically replied:

“Our God is the God of all people,

the God of heaven and earth and of the sea and rivers;

the God of the sun and of the moon and of all the stars;

the God of the lofty mountains and of the lower valleys;

God is above the heavens and in heaven and under heaven;

his habitation is above heaven and the earth and the sea,

and all things which are therein:

He inspires all things,

He enlivens all things,

He overcomes all things,

He supports all things,


He enlightens the sun.

He strengthens the light of night and our knowledge.

He made fountains in dry places and dry islands in the sea,

and he placed the stars from the office of greater lights.

He has a Son who is coeternal with himself, nor is the Son younger than the Father nor the Father older than the Son, and the Holy Spirit breathes in them; the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. But I wish you were united to the heavenly king, as you are the daughters of an earthly king.”

INNOVATIVE: Some say it was with these princesses that Patrick first illustrated the Trinity with a **shamrock**. As the leaf of the shamrock has three lobes,  so the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three aspects of God, yet one.

Influential women like these princesses were important partners in bringing Ireland to Christianity. But the biggest breakthrough came after Patrick’s intrepid defiance of the high king and Druid priests. One spring, a pagan festival at Tara coincided with Easter Eve. Druid rites forbid any fire to be lit before the king’s own. Patrick commanded attention by lighting not just a fire, but a **huge bonfire!** King Loigaire sent to apprehend Patrick. The angry Druid priests vowed to destroy him by sorcery.

Dressed in white, and singing his famous prayer for encouragement, Patrick and his followers came to the king. The arrest had brought opportunity! Now Patrick explained to Loigaire himself the bonfire’s meaning: **Jesus Christ was the light of the world!**

He was crucified for our sins on Good Friday and arose again on Easter. Amazed, the king believed. Following his example, thousands of others came to faith in Jesus.

By the time of Patrick’s death, he had founded 300 churches and baptized 100,000 Irish. He had convinced Druids that their worship was idolatry that kept them enslaved. Through Christ they could become “people of the Lord and sons of God.”

It was Patrick’s **INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP** with God that sustained him:

He related that while tending sheep, “Frequently in the night I prayed, and the love of God and his fear increased more and more in me.” One of his famous prayers asks “the way of God to direct us,” and Christ to be “with us, before us, in us.”

You too can walk in the way of God that Patrick found. You too can make a difference!

- **Turn to the Creator, who is Lord of all nature. He loves you!** Repent of going your own way and its errors. Accept God’s way of forgiveness though Jesus.
- **Learn more** of him through his words in the Bible. Pray, practice love, meet regularly with other true believers - and share this good news – the gospel – with others you meet!