



## St. Patrick

March 17<sup>th</sup>

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Saint Patrick was born towards the end of the fourth century in a wealthy British family. But he had a traumatic childhood; he was taken by Irish “raiders” and enslaved as a teenager after they raided his hometown. His father was a deacon and, during his six years in slavery in Ireland, Patrick leaned heavily on his faith. He worked as a shepherd, outdoors and away from people – this led him to becoming a devout Christian.

Eventually, he had a dream that the ship would carry him back home and did successfully escape, thus, returning to Britain. According to his spiritual autobiography, Confessio, he heard God's voice telling him it was time to leave Ireland. So, it's said Patrick walked nearly 200 miles from where it is believed he was held to the Irish coast. During the Dark Ages, Ireland was known as the Land of Saints & Scholars, a place of burgeoning culture and Christianity.

After escaping to Britain, Patrick experienced a second revelation via a dream where an angel tells him to return to Ireland as a missionary. He began religious training, a course of study that lasted more than 15 years. Finally, acting upon God's call to be a missionary, Patrick journeyed across Ireland as a newly ordained priest to minister to a growing Christian population as well as convert the pagans to Christianity. Because he was familiar with aspects of Irish culture, he integrated traditional ritual into his lessons of Christianity instead of attempting to eradicate native Irish beliefs. He also superimposed a sun – which is a powerful Irish symbol – onto the cross to create a Celtic cross; therefore, the veneration of the symbol would be more natural and meaningful to the Irish. At times, he brought gifts to the people he sought to serve on mission but accepted nothing. This doesn't mean that he was necessarily well-received. On one occasion, he was cast into chains. On

another, he addressed with lyrical pathos a last farewell to his converts who had been slain or kidnapped by the soldiers of Coroticus. He became known as the “Apostle of Ireland.”

Today by all accounts we celebrate the day he died, which is believed to be March 17<sup>th</sup> around the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. He is the patron saint of Ireland, along with Saint Brigid.

St. Patrick, pray for us.