



ST. PATRICK

- not the patron saint of pubs!

—by Dr Peter Hammond

Patrick was only 16 years old when he saw a fleet of 50 long-boats heading for the shore. As the Roman Legions had long since departed Britain, Patrick's home town was vulnerable to attack. As the Irish raiders leapt from their boats onto the pebbled beach, sounding their war-horns, the population fled in terror. The

used as drinking bowls; heads of decapitated enemies were used as footballs.

In this strange place at 'the ends of the earth' amongst these fierce people, Patrick remembered the faith of his father and grandfather, and the prayers of his mother and turned to Christ. Kneeling on the slopes of the Slemish Mountain, near what is now the town of Ballymena, Patrick prayed, sometimes a hundred times a day.

turned to the land where he had suffered as a slave many years before.

Leaving a spiritual legacy

Patrick was over 40 years old when he arrived as a missionary to Ireland in AD 432. He faced fierce opposition from the Druids. Patrick survived numerous attempts on his life and confronted the idolatry, immorality, slavery and human sacrifices of the savage tribes.

"Daily I expect murder, fraud or captivity, but I fear none of these things because of the promises of Heaven. I have cast myself into the hands of God Almighty who rules everywhere." Patrick delighted in taking risks for the Gospel. "I must take this decision disregarding risks involved and make known the gifts of God and His everlasting consolation. Neither must I fear any such risk in faithfully preaching God's Name boldly in every place, so that even after my death, a spiritual legacy may be left for my brethren and my children."

Confronting the Druid religion

At Tara, Patrick challenged the Druids to a contest. The Druids invoked demons and brought a dark fog over the land. Patrick prayed and suddenly the fog cleared and the sun shone brightly. The king ordered 27 chariots to go and seize Patrick. He prayed aloud: "May God come up to scatter His enemies and may those who hate Him flee from His face." The

The 17th March, popularly known as St. Patrick's Day, is believed to be his death date. Saint Patrick is venerated with a 'feast' day in the Church calendar, yet many Christians do not know what this man did to further the Gospel in Ireland and Europe.

charioteers fell dead. Patrick rebuked the king: "If you do not believe now, you will die on the spot for the wrath of God descends on your head." The king fell on his knees before the missionary and pledged his realm to Christ. Many turned to Christ on that day.

One of Patrick's writings was a letter excommunicating a tyrant Coroticus who had carried off some of Patrick's converts into slavery. Within his lifetime Patrick ended the slave trade in Ireland. The legend that Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland has to do with his spiritual warfare in driving the demons from the land.

The famous 'Lorica' - Patrick's Breastplate prayer of protection expresses Patrick's confidence in God to protect him from "every fierce, merciless force that may come

upon my body and soul, incantations of false prophets, black laws of paganism, deceit of idolatry, spells of druids..."

Training others to spread the Word

Patrick was one of the first great missionaries who brought the Gospel beyond the boundaries of the old Roman Civilisation. Patrick's missionary strategy was to concentrate on converting the tribal kings. As the kings converted, they gave their sons to Patrick to be trained as missionaries. From kingdom to kingdom, Patrick converted pagans, built churches, trained disciples, ordained deacons

and ministers and built mission stations. Patrick provided pastors with written

doctrinal standards with which to teach their people.

Evangelising Europe

For 30 years Patrick evangelised Ireland, converting many chiefs and kings, establishing over 300 congregations and baptising 120 000 people.

Patrick became an inspiring example for Celtic Christians. His life of continuous prayer, his love for the Scriptures, his love of God's Creation and missionary vision inspired many hundreds of Celts to take the Gospel to Scotland, England and throughout Europe. ■

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Saint Patrick is often referred to in jest as the patron saint of pubs. This honourable Christian missionary was anything but that.



attackers looted and burned the village and carried away captives, including young Patrick.

A man of noble character

The year was AD 405. Patrick's name in Latin was Patricius, meaning 'Noble'. He was the son of a Civil Magistrate, but now he had become a slave in Ireland. Patrick was sold to a cruel warrior chief whose stockade in Northern Ireland was surrounded by sharp poles with the heads of his opponents impaled on them. Patrick was put to work as a shepherd to care for his master's pigs and sheep.

He lived a lonely existence in the nearby hills, enduring long bouts of hunger and thirst, isolated from human company for months at a time. Patrick witnessed the superstitions of the Druid priests who sacrificed prisoners of war to their war gods and newborns to the harvest gods. Skulls were

An end to his enslavement

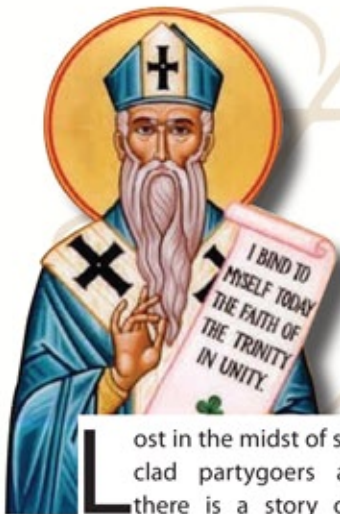
After six years of slavery, Patrick was led of the Lord to escape and run nearly 200 miles to a coastal port where he was able to persuade a captain to take him along with a shipment of Irish wolfhounds. A storm blew them off course to land on the coast of Gaul (France).

Attacks by vandals had devastated the area and there was no food to be found in the, once fertile, area. Here Patrick was able to repay the kindness of the ship captain by praying for the Lord's provision - and then seeing a herd of pigs appear.

A voice to the Irish people

Patrick received a Macedonian call. In a vision, an Irishman named Victoricius presented him letters entitled 'The Voice of the Irish': "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us again". Patrick was "pierced to my very heart" and he re-





Leadership Lessons from St. Patrick's Life



Lost in the midst of shamrocks, green-clad partygoers and leprechauns there is a story of a tremendous leader - Saint Patrick - whose life teaches valuable lessons about the power of forgiveness. Kidnapped and then enslaved, Patrick clung to his faith and later escaped.

Lesson 1: don't harbour grudges

After being enslaved in Ireland, you would think Patrick would have been embittered at the Irish for stealing six years of his life. However, he dedicated the next 15 years to studying theology in preparation for a return trip to Ireland as a missionary. Despite being kidnapped and cruelly mistreated, Patrick chose forgiveness and showed compassion to his former captors.

Lesson 2: go the extra mile

Patrick was not welcome in Ireland - especially when he began teaching a religion that ran contrary to the beliefs held by Druid priests. However, Patrick won favour by returning to his former master and paying the ransom price of a slave as 'compensation' for his escape. This generous gesture astounded and appeased them, giving Pat-

rick a platform to share his religious views. Patrick's goal wasn't to make accusations, but rather, by extending forgiveness, to acquire influence.

Lesson 3: find common ground

During his six years of forced labour in Ireland, Patrick gained a working knowledge of the Celtic language. When he returned as a priest, he could speak directly to the Irish in their native tongue. Furthermore, Patrick understood the religious sensibilities of Druidism from his time in captivity. Accordingly, he was able to communicate the message of the Christian faith in images that made sense to the Irish. As legend has it, Patrick created the Celtic cross in an effort to connect the significance of Christ's death on the Cross with the Irish people's veneration for the sun. Another popular legend holds that he

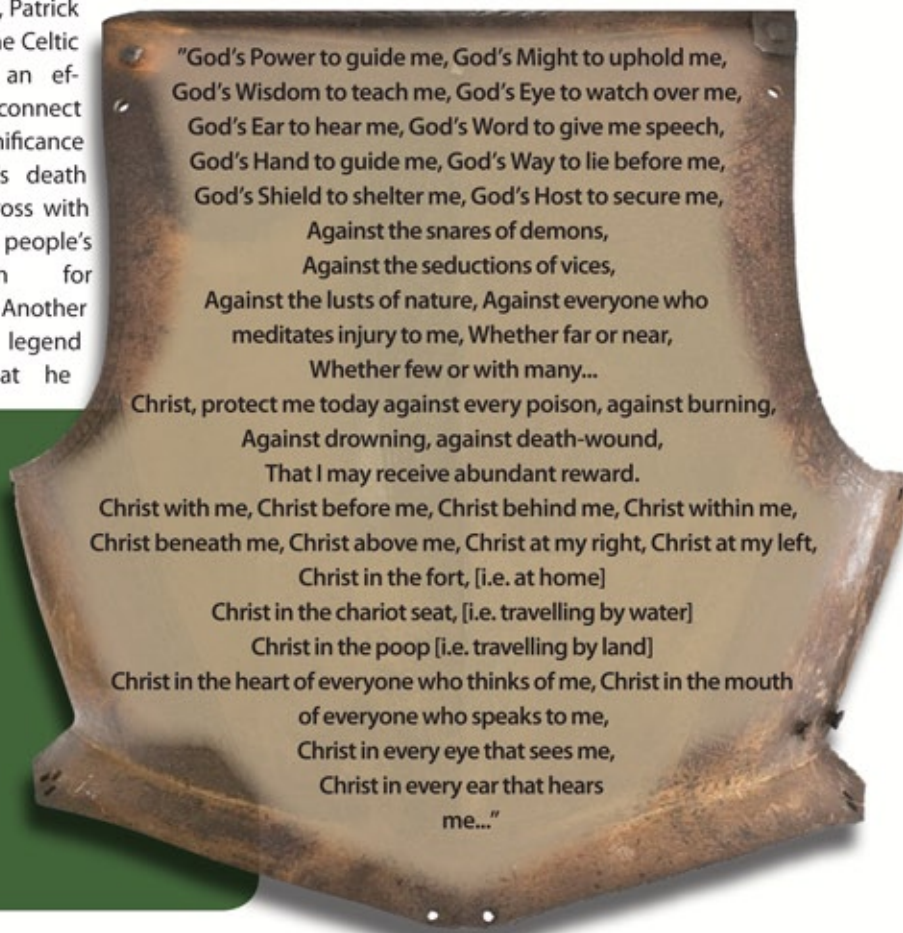
used the shamrock, another natural symbol, to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity. Whatever the case, Patrick's ability to deliver his message in ways the Irish could understand had a profound impact. Within a century, the entire nation of Ireland had converted to the religious faith of one of its former slaves.

St Patrick's influence

Regardless of a person's religious beliefs, there's no denying Saint Patrick's enormous influence as a leader. By harnessing the power of forgiveness, the one-time slave persuaded his former captors, and their entire nation, to adopt his Christian faith. ■

ST. PATRICK'S PRAYER

St. Patrick's Breastplate prayer is contained in the ancient Book of Armagh, from the early 9th Century, along with Patrick's authentic 'Confession'. St. Patrick is said to have written this prayer to strengthen himself with God's protection as he prepared to confront and convert Loegaire, high king of Ireland. He had this prayer emblazened on his breastplate, and often recited it before going into difficult situations. Christians around the world regularly recite this prayer, to offer strength and protection. ■



"God's Power to guide me, God's Might to uphold me,
 God's Wisdom to teach me, God's Eye to watch over me,
 God's Ear to hear me, God's Word to give me speech,
 God's Hand to guide me, God's Way to lie before me,
 God's Shield to shelter me, God's Host to secure me,
 Against the snares of demons,
 Against the seductions of vices,
 Against the lusts of nature, Against everyone who
 meditates injury to me, Whether far or near,
 Whether few or with many..."

Christ, protect me today against every poison, against burning,
 Against drowning, against death-wound,
 That I may receive abundant reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
 Christ in the fort, [i.e. at home]

Christ in the chariot seat, [i.e. travelling by water]

Christ in the poop [i.e. travelling by land]

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth
 of everyone who speaks to me,
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears
 me..."