Lives of Saints

St Patrick

389? – 461?
Feast day: 17th March

I was born in Scotland. My father belonged to a Roman family of high rank. At 16, I was captured by Irish raiders, and sold as a slave in Ireland. There I was forced to work as a shepherd, and I suffered greatly from hunger and cold.

My captivity led to my spiritual conversion. I learnt humility and courage, and I learned to accept suffering and sickness with equal indifference. I also grew in faith and prayed unceasingly. On a practical level I acquired the Celtic tongue, and became familiar with Druidism. After 6 years I escaped to France and later returned to Britain at the age of 22.

As a priest in Britain, I once, had a vision in which it seemed "all the children of Ireland from their mothers' wombs were stretching out their hands" to me. I understood the vision to be a call to do mission work in pagan Ireland. There were some who felt my education had been defective, since I had been sold into slavery at such a young age, and I therefore returned to France and studied with dedication and enthusiasm. I was called to Rome, and made bishop at the age of 43 and finally arrived in Ireland in the winter of 432, with a group of 25.

When in Ireland, I went to the west and to the north, where the faith had never been preached. Fortunately, King Laoghaire allowed us to travel freely, and many converted to Christianity. On my part, I insisted especially that widows remain chaste and young women celebrate their virginity for Christ. I ordained many priests, divided the country into dioceses, held Church councils, founded several monasteries and continually urged my people to greater holiness in Christ.

"Christ be in the heart of every man who thinks of me…Christ be in every eye that sees me…"

St Patrick

S.D.C.

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