

St Patrick

Every Irish person knows that **St Patrick's Day is the 17th March** and that he is our Patron Saint. Most people know something about his story too –



that he was kidnapped by Irish raiders when he was just 16 years old and sold into slavery to mind sheep out on the mountains in all weathers. From what St Patrick wrote later, we know that although he came from a family of faith he didn't much bother with God until he found himself alone, hungry, cold and afraid and far from everyone who loved and cared for him.

He tells us that he used to pray sometimes all night for God to come to his rescue. One night he had a

dream in which a voice told him that his ship was ready to take him home. He believed that this was the voice of God. He managed to escape and made his way to a boat for home. But even after he was safely back with his family, he continued to have dreams. This time the voices were those of Irish people calling him back to Ireland! I wonder how he felt when he heard the Irish voices calling him, considering how cruel Irish people had been to him. But Patrick made up his mind to become a priest and come back to tell the Irish about God and his great love for us. So, many years after escaping from slavery in Ireland, St Patrick, now a bishop, returned to spread the Gospel. He spent the rest of his life here doing just that.

There are very many stories about St Patrick and his work here in Ireland, about the difficulties and successes he had. Some of the stories tell us of how he used a little plant which could be found in fields all over Ireland to help to teach Irish people about God. Do you know what that plant is?!! Of course you do, it's the shamrock, a little plant which is now considered a symbol of Ireland and of Irish things! St Patrick used it to explain about the mystery of the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



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St Patrick is a wonderful example of what ONE person can do when they are dedicated to doing God's work and to using their gifts and talents in his service. What a huge difference Patrick made to Ireland: by the time he died, Ireland which had been a pagan country was well on the way to becoming Christian.

Interesting facts about St Patrick

- The name his parents gave him was not Patrick but **Succat**
- Most people feel that he was kidnapped from his home in England or Wales but some people believe he was from Brittany in France.
- There are thousands of places & organisations in Ireland and round the world named after St Patrick – do you know any? Some of them are very well known like Croagh Patrick Mountain in Mayo or St Patrick's Island in Lough Derg in Donegal.
- Patrick wrote some books, and some famous prayers which have even been put to music.
- Legend has it that he drove all the snakes out of Ireland!
- He died on 17th March and is buried in a place called Downpatrick in Co Down, beside the Cathedral. (Perhaps you could visit there in the Summer!!)

