

### **PATRICK, A HUMBLE MAN OF POWERFUL FAITH.**

Patrick was not the first missionary sent in Ireland. This honour belongs to Palladius, who was sent by Rome in AD 431 to “ the Irish believers in Christ”. But he was succeeded in Ireland by the much more known and honoured Patrick.

Patrick, which means of noble birth, was born around AD 385 in Bannavem Taberniae, a Welch town under Roman rule. His father, Calpurnius, was a local councillor and a deacon and his grandfather was a priest. (This was very, very long before celibacy was required of men of the cloth.)

At the age of 16 he was captured by slave traders and sold into captivity in Ireland. His testimony is that as a slave he was sustained by his faith in Christ: a faith he held strongly, and clung to through long hours of prayer. After six years he escaped and took a ship home. He is then called by God to become a missionary to Ireland, in a dream, but did not go immediately, because as a result of being a slave, he was still uneducated.

He was trained and ordained as a priest, and was sent to Ireland as a bishop, shortly after the death of Palladius. He then went, but was still doubtful of his fitness for this calling. This led to more fervent prayers and a simple faith that trusted Christ for his task to convert the vast majority of the Irish who, at the time, were still pagans.

Not long after his arrival he, according to writers of the time, “utterly confident in the Lord, journeyed far and wide, baptising and confirming with untiring zeal.” He gave gifts to the King, but he did not accept any from him, remaining both a dutiful citizen, and an independent man of God, with integrity. On at least one occasion he was thrown in jail. He lived in constant danger of martyrdom, yet it became known that he laboured hard and zealously as a man of faith, of simple childlike, yet powerful faith.

Patrick did not convert all the people of Ireland, but at his death in AD 461 he left it a land where the Christian Faith was firmly established. After Patrick, Irish men would carry the faith, now well established in Ireland, to Scotland and back to northern England, after relentless persecution almost wiped out the English Church.

Patrick is hailed in Ireland as a patron saint and a national symbol of Irish ambition and pride. Yet, he was a simple Welsh apostle who loved Christ dearly and served him powerfully, sustained by his childlike faith in the Lord. He was instrumental to establishing a church in what today are all the countries of Great Britain. When the time came many centuries later for the British to sail all the seas of the world and conquer much of the planet, they were also ready to spread the good news and plant the Church across the globe.

The story of a slave-boy who became key to spreading the gospel of Christ, eventually even worldwide, should remind us that in God’s hands we can be powerful instruments of the gospel. But we always will have to remain zealous, humble and faithful to the end.

### **The breastplate prayer of Patrick.**

I bind unto myself today  
The strong Name of the Trinity,  
By invocation of the same,  
The Three in One and One in Three.

I bind this day to me forever.  
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;  
His baptism in the Jordan river;  
His death on the Cross for my salvation;  
His bursting from the spiced tomb;  
His riding up the heavenly way;  
His coming at the day of doom;\*  
I bind unto myself today.

I bind unto myself the power  
Of the great love of the cherubim;  
The sweet 'well done' in judgment hour,  
The service of the seraphim,  
Confessors' faith, Apostles' word,  
The Patriarchs' prayers, the Prophets' scrolls,  
All good deeds done unto the Lord,  
And purity of virgin souls.

I bind unto myself today  
The virtues of the starlit heaven,  
The glorious sun's life-giving ray,  
The whiteness of the moon at even,  
The flashing of the lightning free,  
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,  
The stable earth, the deep salt sea,

Around the old eternal rocks.  
I bind unto myself today  
The power of God to hold and lead,  
His eye to watch, His might to stay,  
His ear to hearken to my need.  
The wisdom of my God to teach,  
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,  
The word of God to give me speech,  
His heavenly host to be my guard.

Against the demon snares of sin,  
The vice that gives temptation force,  
The natural lusts that war within,  
The hostile men that mar my course;  
Or few or many, far or nigh,  
In every place and in all hours,  
Against their fierce hostility,  
I bind to me these holy powers.

Against all Satan's spells and wiles,  
Against false words of heresy,  
Against the knowledge that defiles,  
Against the heart's idolatry,

Against the wizard's evil craft,  
Against the death wound and the burning,  
The choking wave and the poisoned shaft,  
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

I bind unto myself the Name,  
The strong Name of the Trinity;  
By invocation of the same.  
The Three in One, and One in Three,  
Of Whom all nature hath creation,  
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:  
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,  
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.  
Amen.

**References:**

1. O'Rahilly, Thomas Francis (1942), *The Two Patricks*.
2. *St Patrick in the Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913).
3. *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*.
4. All About Saint Patrick's Day, *Church Year* Retrieved 2011-02-20