

The story of Saint Patrick (San Patricio)

Written by By Sean Wells Contributing Artist
Friday, 19 March 2021 04:12



Patron of Ireland, engineers, herpetologists

FEAST DAY MARCH 17

We have all enjoyed the green flair and parades of good ol' Saint Paddy's Day. But, we rarely stop to consider the saint behind the day, Saint Patrick of Ireland. Often depicted herding snakes off the green isle in a robust Bishop's garb, his legends and his story have entertained and inspired generations. But, does he deserve an entire holiday?

Although he is generally credited with driving the snakes from Ireland, the originally icy island was anthropologically shown to be without snakes and as an island, did not see the appearance of snakes until modern times. In fact, Ireland just recorded the first venomous snake bite ever, almost a year ago today! But, the crediting of the snake eradication is likely to be a misunderstanding of some ancient text in which a pagan group affiliated with human sacrifice and Samhain, the dark harvest festival that served as the root for Halloween, was driven out by Saint Patrick and a small army.

The group was referred to as 'snakes.'

He was born into wealth in Great Britain. He had some religious exposure since his father

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served as a deacon, although they were not a particularly religious family. At the age of 16, Patrick was taken by Irish pirates from the estate. He was enslaved as a shepherd, tending a flock.

Sad, lonely, and scared, he turned to his faith, with many hours to contemplate his life. After six years in captivity, Patrick was visited by God who instructed him to leave Ireland. He walked hundreds of miles to the coast and found passage back to Britain and his family. When he returned, he pursued the study of the Christian religion with vigor and eventually became a Bishop.

Soon, he was visited again by voices or angels encouraging him to return to Ireland which he did, serving the existing Christians and converting many to Christianity over a period of 40 years. His sermons were notoriously long and intense and legend says he once gave a sermon so extended, that his staff grew roots and an ash tree grew there to mark the spot.

Despite the fact that his captors were Irish and he was British, Patrick was well-loved by the Irish people. He wrote an article denouncing the British treatment of Irish Christians, referred to as the Letter to Coroticus. He also spoke to the people showing respect for their traditions, incorporating much Celtic and Irish symbology in his lectures.

In this image, he holds the Irish shamrock to illustrate the Holy Trinity: The Father, Son and Holy Ghost. He also used the sun, a strong Celtic symbol, centered on the cross to create the variant cross now known as the Celtic Cross.

He was both brave and gentle and inspired a country to embrace Christianity. Perhaps he didn't drive out the snakes, but he certainly rang in much joy and hope! He died on March 17, 461A.D, which marks his Feast Day. Although he was never officially canonized by the Catholic Church, he remains much beloved and popularly recognized.

A Saint all over the world, he is a symbol of courage, faith, endurance, perseverance, forgiveness, and unity for Ireland and the world.

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Eat cabbage and brisket, drink green beer and say a toast for Saint Patrick to keep the snakes at bay, whatever they be to you!

Saint Patrick is often shown in a green garb accented by white and gold. He is often depicted at the water's edge, surrounded by the green fields and rocky cliffs of Ireland.

Enjoy coloring this image of the month!

By Sean Wells
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