

Novena to Saint Patrick

O Blessed Apostle of Ireland, glorious St. Patrick, who didst become my father and benefactor long before my birth, receive my prayers, and accept the sentiments of gratitude and veneration with which my heart is filled towards thee. Thou wert the channel of the greatest graces to me; deign then to become also the channel of my grateful thanksgivings to God for having granted me, through thee, that precious gift of faith, which is dearer than life. O most blessed father, and patron of my country, do not, I beseech thee, despise my weakness. Remember, that the cries of little children were the mysterious invitation thou didst receive to come among us. Listen then to my most humble supplications; I unite them to the praises and blessings which will ever follow thy name and thy memory throughout the Irish Church; I unite them to the prayers of the multitude of my ancestors, who now enjoy eternal bliss, and owe their salvation, under God, to thy zeal and charity. They will eternally share thy glory, because they listened to thy word, and followed thy example. Ah! since I am descended from saints, may I blush to differ from them: may I begin from this moment to love God with all my heart, and serve him with all my strength. For this end I most humbly beg thy blessing, O great St. Patrick and thy particular intercession, for obtaining whatever grace thou seest to be most necessary for me, and also the particular intentions of this Novena.

O charitable Shepherd of the Irish flock who wouldst have laid down a thousand lives to save one soul, take my soul, and the souls of all Christians, under thy special care, and preserve us from the dreadful misfortune of sin. Thy zealous preaching provided us the blessings of religious instructions which we now enjoy; obtain that none of us may receive them in vain. Thou didst teach our ancestors to love our holy Faith, obtain for us that we may be true to it till death. I most humbly recommend to thee this country, which was so dear to thee while on earth. Protect it still; and above all, obtain for its pastors, particularly those who instruct us, the grace to walk in thy footsteps, that they may share in thy eternal bliss.



St. Patrick Bishop, Apostle of Ireland

by Rev. Charles Fell and Bishop Richard Challoner 1750

Patrick, a native of that part of Britain now called Scotland, was born about the middle of the 4th Century. The Romans having left this Island naked and defenseless, it's inhabitants were an easy prey to their troublesome neighbors the Irish, who made several incursions, and carried off considerable booty. Our Saint was sixteen years old, when he fell into the hands of those plunderers; and was carried into Ireland, where the hardships of slavery were to prepare him for the labors of an Apostle; and the experience he had of

the spiritual necessities of that people was to inspire him with the charitable design of carrying the Light of the Gospel amongst them. After he had spent five or six years in that Ireland, he found means to make his escape, and return to his own country. He stayed there about four months, and in that time had frequent visions relating to the place of his late captivity, which he took as so many Divine admonitions for endeavoring the conversion of the Island he had left.

Some time afterwards he accompanied his parents to Armorica, which now makes part of France, and is called Britany. Here they were set on by Barbarians, who murdered his father and mother, and sold him to some of the Picts, a savage people, that then inhabited this Island; but recovered his liberty after two months Service. About the Year 400 he was taken a third time by pirates who infested the British Coast. They carried him to Bourdeaux, and sold him.

He did not remain long with his new master, who, pitying his misfortunes, gave him leave to follow his own inclinations. They directed him to religious retirement in the Monastery of Marmoutier, built near Tours by St. Martin, Bishop of that City. Here he received the Monastic Tonsure from the hands of that holy prelate's immediate successor. The pious founder of that House had formed his devout Community by the rules of excellent discipline, and made it a nursery of virtue. Patrick spent three years here and employed that time in the practice of religious and penitential Exercises. St. Martin's Life and Labours for the Conversion of the Heathens were the constant object of his thoughts, and pushed him on to exert himself in the same manner.

With this view he returned to Britain, with a design of preaching the Gospel in Ireland. But meeting with several difficulties in his way, he was obliged to desist for the present, so went back into Gaul; from thence he made the tour of Italy and spent almost seven years in visiting the several monasteries and hermitages in that country and the adjacent Islands. In 410 he was ordained a priest by Senior Bishop of Pisa, and remained three years under the direction of that prelate to improve himself in the knowledge of Church affairs. During that time his concern for the salvation of the Irish gave him much disturbance; he had a great compassion for their misery, and considered them with the tenderness of an Apostle, and therefore could enjoy no repose, while at that distance from what his visions made him look on as his flock.

In the Year 413 he gave a loose to his zeal; and believing himself called to the labors of that mission, went for Ireland. He preached to the natives of that Kingdom; but without any success; which put him upon reflecting on his own conduct, and concluding that the miscarriage of his endeavors proceeded from his want of a vocation and a regular mission, being thus humbled he went to France, to consult the most virtuous and wisest Prelates of that country, upon his inclinations and duty.

At Auxerre, he found St. Amator Bishop of that city, put himself under his direction, and continued with him till he died, which was three years after our Saint's arrival. Amator

was succeeded in that See by the famous St. German. Patrick spent the same number of years under him, and copied all the virtues and qualifications of a true Pastor from that admirable Master.

In the Year 410 Honoratus, afterwards Bishop of Arles, founded a Monastery in a small Island then called Lerins, and now known by the Name of that Saint, lying off the Coast of Provence. This House was already grown very famous for the piety and angelical life of it's inhabitants. Our Saint, whose whole aim was perfection, went to this School of Virtue in the Year 421, and spent nine years there under the direction of St. Honoratus, and Maximus his Successor in that charge.

After considerable improvements made in that holy society, he went to Rome, with the advice of St. German Bishop of Auxerre; for he was now resolved to do nothing without his approbation his design in that journey was to receive Celestin's Orders for the Mission of Ireland. But the Pope had just sent Palladius into that Country with the character of Bishop. At this new Apostle's arrival, a party of the Irish were preparing for a descent into the North of our Island, where they were joined by the Picts, and made themselves master of a considerable track of land, which has since bore the name of Scotland, from these new inhabitants, then called Scots. These commotions, and Palladius's ignorance of the language and customs of the people made his expedition to Ireland fail of success. He quitted the country, and went with that new colony into great Britain, where he died soon after.

St. Patrick, not finding the Pope disposed to employ him as he wished and desired, went back to Auxerre. In the Year 431 the news of Palladia's Death reached that place; upon which St. German sent him to Rome a second time with letters of recommendation to the same Pope who gave him a very good reception, and put him in possession of what had so long been his only wish. He consecrated him, and gave him commission to preach the Gospel in Ireland; but died before the Saint had received his full instructions, or could be provided with proper companions in this evangelical work.

Sixtus III was raised to the Sea of Rome in 432, and finished what his predecessor's death had left imperfect. Patrick took Auxerre in his way to the scene of his Apostolical labors and spent some days there in receiving Saint German's directions for his conduct. He landed first in Great Britain; and after converting several of the inhabitants of Cornwall, and Cambria, or Wales, pursued his journey to Ireland; where he arrived toward the close of 432, and began his mission in Leinster; and before that year was out, had the satisfaction of gaining several in that Province. When he had made a considerable harvest there, he left a sufficient number of those that came with him from Rome, to finish what he had so happily begun, and followed the dictates of his zeal, which carried him to Ulster; where his endeavors met with an equal success. One of the new converts there devoted a considerable part of his substance to religious uses, which enabled our Saint to build a Monastery near Down, the head town of the County of that name. The House was called Sabal-Pardrigh, i.e. St. Patrick's Grange, and the town itself is still called Down-

Patrick.

As soon as that religious Retreat was built, our Saint filled it with such as were desposed to quit the World, when they took their leave of paganism which alone may let us see what progress religion made in that country, when we remember, how few, even good Christians, think themselves obliged to follow what we call Evangelical Counsels. The Almighty confirmed his ministry, and encouraged his labors by the success that attended them and the miracles performed by his hands. Those, who had assisted him in this great and glorious work, had as yet no other character but that of laborers under our Saint. But finding the flock increase in an extraordinary manner, he was obliged to create new pastors for their use; and therefore ordained several priests and bishops in different parts of that Island. The ardor with which the Irish attended to their instructions was a great encouragement to the zeal of those holy preachers. God worked so powerfully in the hearts of those people, that they demolished the temple of their idols, and all remains of pagan superstition with the utmost alacrity, and raised Churches to the true God in their room.

When he left Ulster, he carried the Light of the Gospel into the Province of Connaught, and the County of Meath; and, left no corner of the whole Island unvisited. The fatigues of so laborious and difficult a mission might seem a sufficient mortification. The badness of the roads the great variety of bad weather, and the grossness and stupidity of those he had to deal with gave him trouble enough to ground an excuse for not practicing austerities on himself. But our Saint was not tender of his own person; he joined rigorous fasts, and other penitential severities to his Apostolical labors.

In 444, He made a journey to Rome, to give an Account of his endeavors and success, and communicated his joy to St. Leo, who then filled St. Peter's Chair, and was engaged by his Station in the Church to a concern for the whole Christian World. At his return he made some stay in the West of Britain, where he preached; and waited for a fresh supply of Bishops, who joined him, and accompanied him to Ireland. Our Saint disposed of them in the Provinces of Leinster, Connaught, and Meath, and then went to Ulster; where he founded the Metropolitan See of Armagh.

The success that attended his labors was so prodigious that he soon wanted more persons to carry on the work in which God had engaged him. With this view he crossed into Britain. He found that Island miserably corrupted by Pelagianism, and Arianism, but recovered great numbers of his countrymen from those pestilent heresies. He got together several men of great learning and piety, whom he carried over with him, formed them to the Mission of Ireland, consecrated thirty of them Bishops, and disposed of most of them in the adjacent Islands, and the Western parts of Britain. The inhabitants of the Province of Munster gave him the most employment; for we are told he spent seven Years in that part of Ireland only. In the Year 455 he made another journey to Rome; where he gained the Pope's confirmation of the Metropolitan Church he had erected; and was afterwards favored with the Pallium, and the Title of Apostolical Legate in Ireland, which title

descended to his Successors. At his return, he dedicated the Cathedral of Armagh, and convened a Council of Bishops to consider of proper regulations for the Church of Ireland.

St. Patrick's strength was now quite exhausted by his continual labors, and he no longer was able to travel as he had done. From the Year 456 he lead a more sedentary life, sometimes at Armagh, and sometime at his Monastery of Sabal. Though his Weakness confined him to a narrow compass, he knew not what it was to be idle. He preached still every day, held councils once a Year, and governed his religious with great exactness.

The natives of Ireland not only owe their Christianity, but even their recovery from ignorance and barbarity to our Saint. When he came amongst them, they were strangers to learning of all sorts; had not the least notion of either reading or writing; and knew no other way of preserving the memory of their Prince's actions, the genealogy of their chief families, or the boundaries of their respective possessions, but by rude and uncultivated rhymes, which had no poetry or harmony. St. Patrick therefore introduced the use of letters amongst them, and laid the first foundations of humanity as well as religion in that Island. Full of merit, and pleased with the success of his ministry, he concluded his labours and his life together about the Year 460.

He was buried at Down; and his Sanctity manifested by a great number of miracles performed in favor of such as recommended themselves to his Intercession. The English were masters of Ireland in 1185, when our Saint's relics were found; and in the following year proposed to public veneration by a solemn translation of them to Trinity Church in Down, which afterwards bore the Name of our Saint. That Church and St. Patrick's shrine felt the rage of the Reformation, and were demolished by the Lord Grey, Lord Deputy of Ireland, under King Henry VIII. The seventeenth of March is kept in Honor of this Saint, and is supposed to be the day of his Death.

Prayer:

O God, Who didst deign to send blessed Patrick, Thy Confessor and Bishop, to preach Thy glory to the nations; grant, through his merits and intercession, that what Thou commandest us to do, we may by Thy mercy be able to accomplish. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen



From the Divine Office for March 17th – Second Nocturn

Lesson IV

St. Patrick, called the Apostle of Ireland, whose father was Calphurnius, and whose mother was Conchessa, a relative, it is said, of St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, was born in greater Britain, and as a boy several times fell into captivity with the barbarians. When in their hands he was employed as a shepherd, he already gave signs of future holiness; for, filled with faith and the fear of God and the spirit of love, he would diligently rise before dawn, in snow, and frost, and rain, to pour forth prayers to God. It was his custom to pray to God a hundred times during the day, and a hundred during the night. After his third deliverance from slavery, he entered the clerical state, and applied himself, for a considerable time, to the study of sacred works. Having made several very trying journeys through Gaul, Italy, and the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea, he was finally called by God to work for the salvation of the Irish; and having commission from the blessed Pope Celestine to preach the Gospel, and being consecrated bishop, he proceeded to Ireland.

Lesson V

It is a marvel how much this apostolic man had to endure in this mission; how many evils, how many hardships and labors, how many enemies. But, favored by the mercy of God, that land which up to now had worshiped idols, soon brought forth such fruit from Patrick's preaching that it was afterwards called the Island of the Saints. Very many people were regenerated in the holy font by him; bishops and many clerics were ordained; rules were drawn up for virgins and widows living in continency. By the authority of the Roman Pontiff, he appointed Armagh as the chief metropolitan see of the whole island, and enriched it with relics of saints, brought from Rome. Moreover, Patrick so shone forth, adorned by God with heavenly visions, with the gift of prophecy, and great signs and wonders, that his fame became more and more celebrated, and spread itself far and wide.

Lesson VI

Besides his daily care of the Churches, his invincible spirit never slackened in prayer. For it is said, that he was accustomed to recite every day the whole Psalter, together with the Canticles and Hymns, and two hundred prayers; that he knelt down every day three hundred times to adore God; and that at each canonical Hour of the day, he signed himself a hundred times with the sign of the cross. He divided the night into three parts: first, he repeated the first hundred Psalms, and genuflected two hundred times; the second was spent in reciting the remaining fifty Psalms, standing in cold water, with his heart, eyes, and hands lifted up to heaven; the third he gave to a little sleep, stretched upon a bare stone. Remarkable for his practice of humility, like the Apostles, he did not abstain from manual labor. At length, worn out by his incessant cares for the Church, glorious in word and work, in extreme old age, he fell asleep in the Lord, after being strengthened with the divine mysteries. He was buried at Down, In Ulster, in the fifth century of the Christian era.

Comment: If we desire to do great things for God and the Church in working for the Salvation of souls, it will be well to imitate St. Patrick in his life of prayer and penance.

May God's goodness and graces forever be yours,
May your faith always hold firm and true,
May the Word always guide you along a bright path...
And each day bring new Blessings to you.



Old Irish Prayer

Alone with none but Thee, my God,
I journey on my way.
What need I fear,
when Thou art near
O King of night and day?
More safe am I within Thy hand
Than if a host did round me stand.
St. Columba

The Breastplate of St. Patrick, also known as The Lorica

The Lorica is an ancient Gaelic prayer attributed to St. Patrick and is an invocation to the Holy Trinity, usually recited in the morning. In the early Irish Church, loricæ were numerous; some were written in Gaelic and some in Latin. In fact, the word, Lorica, is Latin, meaning shield or breastplate. Since prayer is a spiritual shield, these Irish loricæ were prayed for protection against spiritual evils, but also from physical ones; the loricæ came into being when the Gaelic pagans converted to Catholicism: the loricæ were the replacement for the old incantations, which the new Christians discarded.

I.

I bind to myself today
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,
The faith of the Trinity in Unity
The Creator of the Universe.

II.

I bind to myself today
The might of the Incarnation of Christ
with that of His Baptism,
The might of His Crucifixion with that of His Burial,
The might of His Resurrection with that of His Ascension.
The might of His Coming on the Judgment Day.

III.

I bind to myself today

The power in the love of the Seraphim,
In the obedience of the Angels,
In the ministration of the Archangels,
In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,
In the prayers of the Patriarchs,
In the predictions of the Prophets,
In the preaching of the Apostles,
In the faith of the Confessors,
In the purity of the holy Virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.

IV.

I bind to myself today
The power of Heaven,
The brightness of the Sun,
The whiteness of Snow,
The splendor of Fire,
The speed of Lightning,
The swiftness of the Wind,
The depth of the Sea,
The stability of the Earth,
The firmness of Rocks.

V.

I bind to myself today
God's Power to pilot me,
God's Might to uphold me,
God's Wisdom to guide me,
God's Eye to look before me,
God's Ear to hear me,
God's Word to speak for me,
God's Hand to guard 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.

VI.

I invoke today all these virtues
Against every hostile merciless power
Which may assail my body and my soul.

Against the incantations of false prophets,
Against the black laws of heathenism,
Against the false laws of heresy,
Against the deceits of idolatry,
Against the spells of women, and smiths and Druids,
Against every knowledge that blinds the soul of man.

VII.

Christ protect me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
That I may receive abundant reward.

VIII.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ when lying down, Christ in sitting,
Christ in rising up.

IX.

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

X.

I bind to myself today
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,
The faith of the Trinity in Unity
The Creator of the Universe.

XI.

Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of Christ;
May Your salvation, O Lord, be with
us forever.

Happy Saint Patrick's Day

Ora pro nobis.

In Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

Patrick Henry

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