

REFLECTION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. PATRICK

Saint Patrick's Day: a day on which people celebrate Ireland's most famous saint by doing saintly things – like drinking too much green beer hahaha

For instance, did you know that Patrick was not born in Ireland? He was actually born in that part of Britain which was under the control of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the 5th century.

Patrick's life changed when he was 15 years old. Irish pirates attacked Patrick's British village. They killed most of Patrick's family.

They dragged the 15year old Patrick to Ireland and sold him into slavery. Imagine what this must have been like for this teenager. The man who owned Patrick put him to work, tending his farm animals.

It was a horrible existence for this teenage boy. But Patrick had one thing to cling to. His faith. Through the long years of his slavery, Patrick's prayer to Christ was the one thing that gave him peace.

At the age of 22, Patrick escaped from his master and eventually found his way home to Britain. He was finally free.

But here is where the story becomes most compelling to me. As Patrick enjoyed being home again, the Lord spoke to his heart during his times of prayer. And, one day, Patrick announced to his horrified friends and family that he was going back to Ireland...back to the people who had mistreated and enslaved him...in order to love them and to preach the Gospel to them.

He was ordained a bishop, so that he could go back to Ireland and build up the tiny Christian church there.

Once in Ireland, Patrick spent the rest of his days energetically preaching the Good News, caring for the poor, reconciling enemies, building up monasteries, spreading the message of Jesus.

THE most amazing thing about St Patrick's life is this: he escaped slavery, but then chose to go back so that he could minister to the very people who had enslaved him.

They mistreated him – he treated them with the love of Christ. And eventually, Patrick changed the entire culture of Ireland. He changed Ireland because the love of God was so evident in his every action. He loved the Lord. He knew that the Lord love him.

And, almost every person who came into contact with Patrick – including his former slave masters – could not resist the power of God's love in Patrick. Once God's love gets unleashed in a person's life, or in a culture, nothing can stop it. There is nothing more compelling than a person who is on fire with the Love of God.

Saint Patrick changed Ireland – by being a very good revelation of God's love in his culture. So many people saw the beauty of that gift and could not resist it.

Jesus, Patrick – people who allowed love to flow through them – changed their culture for the better.

Patrick's life of struggle and fidelity is a source of courage and inspiration to us. It is not easy to remain faithful. St Patrick shows us where our strength lies – it lies in God whose help comes to us especially through prayer and the sacraments.

May the power of God preserve us; the wisdom of God instruct us; the way of God direct us; and the shield of God defend us. Amen.

Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig oraibh

Fr Patrick