

Official Guide

to the Marvelous Museum
of Salt and Light

My Father's World

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Patrick

A Man Who Loved His Enemies

Have you ever seen a real pirate? Do you think pirates are only in books and movies? Today you'll learn about a 16-year-old boy who saw real pirates.

Patrick grew up in a comfortable Roman home in Britain. His father was a Roman government official and church deacon and his mother taught him to pray. But Patrick thought differently. He turned away from God.

When Patrick was old enough he began working on his father's farm, which was on the west coast of Britain. If you look at a map, you'll see that Britain has a lot of coast line near the sea. Can you also find Ireland?

One day, a horrible day, Patrick was working at the farm and looked up. Fifty longboats filled with Irish warriors were at the shore. Patrick heard the rough and rugged pirates come ashore, speaking a strange language he could not understand. He and many others started running as fast as they could to get away, but it was no use. They were kidnapped and put on the boats to Ireland.

Can you imagine riding a pirate ship to an unknown land? You would think life would have been exciting on a pirate ship for 16-year-old Patrick, but those cruel pirates, led by the man who later became king of Ireland, sold him and other children into slavery. Patrick was sold to a cruel warrior named Chief Milchu. Chief Milchu did not know the true God. He worshipped the sun and the moon, fire, and even rocks, and did many cruel and evil things. Patrick was now a slave in Ireland and no longer a free boy in the beautiful land where he was born. Gradually he learned to speak the language of his Irish master.

He was forced to take care of pigs and sheep for six years, so he was outside all day. He was outside when the sun blazed down its hot rays, when the chilly winds blew off the sea, when storms clapped their loud thunder and buckets of rain poured. Can you imagine how he must have felt being out there for months and months with no warm home to go to?

What would you do if you were alone with no one to talk to? Patrick talked to God. When he was younger, Patrick didn't believe in God. But now his heart was open, and he prayed to God. Kneeling on a grassy slope, he asked God to forgive him of his sins and make him brave. God reached out and gave him a heart of belief—belief in Jesus. From that moment on, Patrick was no longer alone.

Patrick wrote later in his book called *Confessions*, “I said a hundred prayers by day and almost as many by night. I arose before daylight in the snow, in the frost, and the rain, yet I felt no harm. For the Spirit of God was warm within me.”

After six years of being captive, Patrick had a dream. A loud voice said, “You are going home. Look, your ship is ready.” Patrick got up and started running toward the sea. It took many days, because he had to travel 200 miles. Can you imagine racing across rocks and stones and streams in bare feet? When Patrick finally reached the ship, the captain's voice bellowed like a cannon exploding, “No, you can't ride on my ship!” What could Patrick do? What would you do? As he walked away, Patrick started praying. Before Patrick had even finished his prayer, the captain changed his mind and said, “Get on board!” Patrick was heading home.

When the ship arrived on land, the Irish sailors were hungry and needed food. They made fun of Patrick, but he convinced them to pray. So they asked God for food, and a drove of pigs appeared! Roast pork tasted so good to those hungry sailors. As they trudged along for two months they found all kinds of food. They never went hungry, not even for a single day.

Finally Patrick found his way home. He was now 22 years old, and filled with a love for God. He studied God's Word. Then he had another dream from God. He dreamt that some Irish were calling to him: “We ask you, boy, come and walk among us again.” Back to Ireland? Back to the land where he had been forced to be a slave, with no freedom? What do you think he will decide?

Part Two

Patrick decided God had prepared “good works” for him to walk in. So he left home again, this time to prepare for Ireland. He studied the Bible and learned more about God. The church ordained him as a priest. More than anything, Patrick longed to be a father to the Irish people, leading them to know the God he knew. Finally it was time. He gathered twelve courageous monks and they sailed together to Ireland.

At first the Irish were not happy to see him. So he moved to a different part of Ireland. Patrick was determined and said, “Regardless of danger I must make known the gift of God . . . without fear.” He immersed himself in their way of living. He showed them love and respect and embraced their culture. Patrick came as a “friend of the people to introduce them to a friend who had helped him when he needed help most.” He spoke Irish, the Irish he had learned when he was a slave. The people were so awed to hear this foreigner take the time to speak their own language. Now they wanted to listen.

Patrick decided to go back to Chief Milchu, the one who had bought him as a slave, but he was dead. There was a powerful new leader – Chief Dichu. The twelve monks, led by Patrick, marched into the building where Dichu and the Druids were having their own celebration. (Druids worshipped the moon, sun, wind, fire, and rocks, not the true God.)

Calmly and peacefully Patrick and the monks came forward, even though it was very dangerous. One of the monks carried a large cross. Chief Dichu was impressed that Patrick spoke Irish and decided not to harm them. The chief gave his heart to Jesus, and gave Patrick land to build their very first wooden church. Patrick baptized Dichu, and some of the other Druids decided to become Christians.

Patrick realized that he needed to go to the chiefs of each village. So he went from village to village, sharing the truth about God. This wasn’t easy – once he was captured and put into chains. Other times the chiefs threatened to harm or kill him. But Patrick knew he was doing what God wanted him to do.

As he talked to the Irish, he told them about God our Father, Jesus our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our constant friend and helper. Perhaps he picked a green clover with three leaves on one stem to explain the Trinity.

Chieftan after chieftan gave up their pagan worship and listened to the Good News of Jesus. More and more of them gave land where churches, schools, and monasteries could be built. Now thousands of people all over Ireland could read, study, and talk to others about God. Ireland was on fire now, not to participate in Druid worship, but to share the love of God with others. Even people who had once been Druids accepted Jesus and used their harps to sing praises to God.

Patrick understood that God had a plan. He later wrote, “I did not go to Ireland (by my own choice the first time), but this was for my good. I was cleansed by the Lord and changed so

that I wanted to care for the salvation of others.” Does this remind you of Joseph—sold into captivity by his brothers, yet he forgives and provides for many nations?

Patrick died on March 17 in Ireland. That is why we celebrate St. Patrick’s Day on March 17. We remember St. Patrick as a man who was willing to obey God even when it was difficult. Patrick spent his life bringing God’s love to others, even those who had once been his enemies.