



The Cry of the Deer...

I arise today...

Through a mighty strength... Through the strength of heaven,

Light of sun,

Radiance of moon,

Splendor of fire,

Speed of lightning,

Swiftness of wind,

Depth of sea,

Stability of earth,

Firmness of rock....

I arise today...

(*poem attributed to Patrick. This poem has been called "Saint Patrick's Breastplate" named thus because it was thought to protect him from hostile forces).

The Irish.... Green.



Most people hear about St. Patrick's Day coming and get ready to watch the Irish people put on their green ties. Children talk about "leprechauns", play games, and people find a reason to have a celebration...

Some wonder what this holiday is really all about, and who is this person that they call Saint Patrick... Is it really just for Irish people? So, what about this person they call St. Patrick and why all the green?

It is a complex story that reveals another fascinating aspect of human history, which affects our current social and religious

picture today. For it is a story of slavery, environmentalism, religious conflict and hierarchy...

The story actually begins with slavery... But not the kind of which you will automatically think.* For Patrick was a slave, a white slave captured as booty in an Irish raid on his homeland of Wales. Patrick was a youth about fifteen years old at the time. He was living a normal life with his family, when he was stolen one day by the rowdy, rampaging Irish... He was taken to Ireland and forced to serve an Irish landowner, tending his sheep... For six years he was alone, left on the windy, damp hillside as shepherd/slave. He was not treated well as a slave. Patrick wrote that during those days he had only two friends: hunger and nakedness.

An Environmentalist is Born

During those six long years of hardship, Patrick was forced into a nearness to nature that usually brings this result. The helplessness a small man feels in the face of the grand sky, and stars, and hills cause all the philosophical and scholarly debates about the existence of God to grow very insignificant. Though Patrick was raised during the primitive stages of Christianity in Britain, he had a hard time taking on the new religion his parents had adopted... But on the cold hillsides of central Ireland all his doubts about the existence of God soon began to vanish. In his isolation his heart turned to his Creator. It was a crude "religious experience" at best that he had, as he sat shivering in the wind with the **sheep**. But for Patrick this was his "university of life"... And the "religion" he gained there was much different than what was being preached in the cold cathedrals evolving in Rome. It was a "green religion", for it made the love of nature the thing nearest to the heart of God. As a slave on the hillside he gained a faith that would change the history of the country of Ireland.

So, how does a foreign slave boy, forced to be a shepherd in Ireland, become the one celebrated on their national holiday? Rather than becoming bitter in his slavery, Patrick let his soul be moulded by it. When the day came that in the depth of his suffering, he heard a voice from heaven announcing his liberation, it was not heard by a beaten down and vindictive slave. Patrick, who was now only about

twenty-two years old, responded with a deep sense of trust. He was told in a vision to run away from his slave master, to escape to the sea, that his "ship" was waiting for him at the shore." He later wrote of his many adventures in escaping his slavery. Once he finally ended up back on the soft couch in the home of his parents in Britain, Patrick felt uncomfortable and out of place. He saw the futility of a life lived with no deeper meaning than to just "succeed." In the night he saw the faces of the rough Irishmen who had once held him captive, but he heard them calling him back to Ireland to help them.

Yes, Patrick had fallen in love with the Irish passion, the Irish way, yet he saw that these Irish must change. Their hot-tempered, superstitious, hostile character was filled with sin, lost in darkness. Yet, he loved the Irish. He wanted to help them, to tell them about the love of God that he knew. Against the advice of his parents and everyone else who feared the fierce Irishmen, Patrick headed back to Ireland. He began astounding his former captors with a message about an eternal God who loved them and who could be found in the singing of the wind and the clapping of the thunder. The message of Patrick was not one of dry orthodoxy, but of the love of a God seen in His Creation. He met with the local hillside rulers on the **hill of Tara**, defying all their superstitions and magic, lighting a **fire** in honor of the resurrection of the Messiah... He broke new ground. They respected him and his "fire"... He found a way to communicate to the Irish in their own language... the language of nature. Patrick found the foundation of Irish myth a good place to begin to build. Rather than throwing out the deep Irish connection to nature in all that their myths

For slavery is not always a racial issue. For most slavery over the history of this planet has not been of blacks...there have been slaves of every race. Slavery is a much greater issue than just discussing the aspects of injustices done in the South in the United States. Slavery has been a way of life in most nations of this planet since the beginning of time. Slavery is discussed in depth in the bible, speaking of how in times of great need a family may need to be sold into slavery, but demanding that those "slaves" be treated justly and that they be released at the proper time. These would not have been much more than what we would call a "laborer" in these days. But the control over that person was total, as he had been "purchased" by the slave owner. Now, these are white Israelis purchasing other white, less fortunate Israelis to work for them. Then there were the slaves who were captured in battles, who were kept as workers rather than killed in the war. This sounds outrageous, but if we can get by this first reaction and actually study the positive effects of this in a scholarly fashion we will see that we are only so negatively affected by the whole subject because of the bad experience we have had with it in the United States and other places where there have been abuses. The bible, rather than condemning the whole system of "slavery", rather gets to the heart of the issue, which is the evil in men that would cause them to be mean and unfair to someone under their control. It described slavery as being more of a "family" relationship which met the need of both the needy worker and the owner. But history has shown us that for the most part, human greed has caused the powerful to abuse the needy.

Unfortunately, this has been seen in all facets of society, not just in slave/owner relationships, forcing even paid employees to unite into labor unions to protect themselves from the powerful. It is against this whole principle that Patrick took a stand... trying to change the heart of humans.

Green Greetings.....



This was the foundation of the Celtic Church in Ireland. It was not a “Roman church” in the beginning. In fact, when Rome finally took note of the movement in Ireland and sent in their officials to bring it into line with the “established church” on the continent, they found many practices among Patrick’s followers in the Celtic Church which were foreign to them. There was heated debate with the Roman representatives and the Celtic believers did not finally bend to their Roman creeds until years after Patrick’s death.

Patrick did not call himself Saint Patrick... although he must have been a very saintly character. He succeeded in breaking through to the Irish people who probably never would have received the “Roman-style preaching” of the fourth/fifth century in Europe. The austere Augustinian dogma of that day would have hit a very unreceptive nerve in the Irish. The ancient Irish were a passionate lot who found trees and all of nature to be a magic source of spiritual truth.... That is why the old story goes that Patrick explained to the Irish about the *trinity* by picking a piece of clover, a *shamrock*. Though it cannot be proved, it surely must be true. That was Patrick’s style... that was the way he won the Irish...

Oh, how far we have come from the simple religion that the Irish accepted so long ago on the misty hillsides... The indomitable Irish spirit is seen in the fact that even the great Roman Empire did not conquer them... yet, it took only the simple poems of a former slave boy to win these Irish hearts.... One wonders if simple love could once again win a dark world...

It is a story of slavery, and kindness, and passion, and nature... and it is the celebration we call Saint Patrick’s day...

What makes us choose one day and make it special? Many don’t really care, it is just a day off...but some are thinkers and not merely reactors... So, take a little time to consider...Life may surprise you with what you will learn, if you just take a little time to consider... PROFOUND GREETING CARDS

PARCHMENT PRESS #1 CHOIR ALLEY, 53 MAIN STREET, PLYMOUTH,
MASSACHUSETTS 02360