

St. Brendan the Navigator

May 16



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484–577 • Ireland

Brendan was a monk and a brave traveler. All throughout Ireland, he founded monastery after monastery so that the Faith could flourish in Ireland. Then he set sail for Britain and navigated the seas to the cliffs of the Welsh shore. For three years, Brendan founded more monasteries in Britain before returning home to Ireland. From his many travels sprang the legend of his great sea voyage to find the Blessed Land of Paradise.

When Brendan and his monks were at prayer, a man stumbled upon them and, with great tears and sighs, told them that he had been to the Blessed Land of Paradise. Brendan and his monks were amazed and determined that they, too, would go on a great voyage to find this blessed land. Brendan and fourteen of his monks set sail, and they had many adventures as they journeyed from island to island.

One night, after many years of wandering, Brendan saw the scales of a great sea monster gleaming in the dark ocean. Rather than being frightened, Brendan sailed right up to the sea monster and landed his boat on top of its back! Bravely, Brendan stepped onto the sea monster's silver scales, and his monks followed his lead. All through the night, they sang hymns to God under the stars on the back of the sea monster. Together in the morning, they said Mass. When Mass was finished, the silver scales shivered beneath them, and the monster began to move. The monks were startled and fearful, but Brendan called out to them not to be alarmed, as they would ride the sea monster to the nearest island.

After the monster left them on the island shore, they filled their boat with many supplies because they knew they would soon reach the Blessed Land of Paradise. When they did arrive there, they saw a land full of the richest fruits and green trees and grass, and they heard running streams and birdsong. An angel appeared and told them to collect the rich fruits and the precious stones sparkling on the shore. They must now return to Ireland because they had been wandering for seven years.

After his return, Brendan founded the great Monastery of Clonfert. Because of Brendan's fame as a traveler by land and by sea, many monks and students also traveled far and wide to study there, and the monastery became famous for holiness and learning. When Brendan died a holy death he was buried at the Monastery of Clonfert. St. Brendan, help me seek God in my journey through life!