

# St. Patrick

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387–461 • Britain

When Patrick was sixteen years old, Irish pirates spotted him on the British coast and kidnapped him. They took him to Ireland and sold him as a slave to the chieftain Milchu, who put him to work watching over his flock of sheep both day and night. The dark night and the cry of the wolves frightened the defenseless Patrick. He would say a hundred prayers in the daytime and as many at night. Strength and courage filled his heart. He knew that God was with him and would keep him safe.

One night, after he had been a slave in Ireland for six years, a voice in the darkness told Patrick that a ship was ready to take him home. Knowing that this voice was an angel from God, Patrick ran away from the chieftain Milchu and traveled two hundred miles to the nearest coast. There a ship was waiting that took him back to Britain. His parents must have feared that he was dead and were overjoyed to see Patrick again. At home, Patrick learned more about God and continued to pray. Then one night, he had a dream that forever changed his life. In the dream, he received a letter from Ireland and heard the Irish people cry out, "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us." When he awoke, Patrick realized that God was calling him to return to Ireland and be a missionary.

Patrick became a priest and returned to Ireland. He knew the Druids and their false religion were powerful in Ireland. But he also knew that God was with him and would keep him safe as He had before. God performed many miracles through Patrick to show the Irish people that He was the one, true God. A Druid celebration in which fire was forbidden fell on the same night as the eve of Easter. Patrick lit a bonfire to celebrate Easter Eve, and the Druids were unable to put it out, no matter how hard they tried. Nor could they do anything to hurt Patrick. Patrick performed many other miracles. He even raised people from the dead in Jesus's name, so that the Irish people could believe in God's power.

Patrick traveled all throughout Ireland, baptizing and preaching the Good News of Jesus's love. Many legends sprang up about Patrick. One of these legends is that he banished all the snakes in Ireland, casting them from a cliff, just the way he banished paganism from that green island. Another is that he left his footprints on a stone where he stood. These legends show just how much the Irish people love St. Patrick. St. Patrick, help me trust that God will always keep me safe!