

A HAPPY AND BLESSED ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

We continue with the readings from the fifth Sunday of Lent on Patrick's day. He was from Scotland and at sixteen, was captured by Irish raiders who put him into slavery, herding sheep here in Ireland. He eventually escaped and returned to his family. He studied for the Priesthood and one night, in a dream, he heard the voices of the Irish people calling him back to Ireland. He answered this vocational call, believing it to be God's divine will. He did not think of himself and returned to Ireland in 432AD. Patrick made his way to the Hill of Slane and lit a huge Paschal Fire, which represented Christ, as the New Light to enlighten the Irish People with Faith. This was in opposition to the large fire that the pagan druids lit on the opposite hill of Tara. St. Patrick converted Ireland into a practicing Christian race. One of his favourite illustrations was to use the three leaf Shamrock to explain the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In the same way as a woman can be three persons in one: a daughter, a mother and a grandmother all at the same time. He is depicted by the image of driving snakes out of Ireland which symbolised the evil presence of Satan operating in our country. Jesus, the Divine Doctor, heals the snake's poisonous bite of sin in the sacrament of confession. He's the remedy for eternal salvation.

WE MUST DIE TO SIN IN ORDER TO GROW IN HOLINESS

In today's Gospel (John 12: 20-33), Jesus uses the example that when a wheat grain falls to the earth, it must die to itself, in order to change and grow into something better and new, that can produce fruits to benefit humanity. If we are to glorify God, we too, who have fallen to earth by birth, must die to sin, in order to grow in holiness and purity of heart. We are to lose our pride, ego, selfishness, and anger, and root ourselves in the Word of God. Only then can we grow into the humble, loving and merciful image of Christ, which will bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus died to Himself, in order to benefit us. Our hour has come to glorify God. As a sacramental people of God, we have to feed on the Sacraments of the Church. Our true citizenship is of Heaven and not of earth. Heaven is our Home. We must give Glory to God and grasp the hour to become free from the dominion of sin. Those who denied hearing the voice from heaven symbolise the unbelievers and spiritually lazy souls. Jesus says that their sentence has been passed if they do not waken up and hear the call of God, as Patrick did. The second reading (Heb 5:7-9) teaches that Jesus *learnt to obey through suffering*. This means that to overcome sin we do the will of God, which entails suffering and sacrifice. In other words, sharing the Cross of Christ. In order to know Jesus, we must look at the Cross. It expresses love, mercy, service, obedience and unreserved self-giving. This is what losing one's life means, in order to find the life of Christ on earth and in heaven. A Blessed St. Patrick's Day!