

A HAPPY AND BLESSED ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

St Patrick came from a Catholic family in Roman Brittany known as Scotland today. At sixteen, while staying with his grandfather, close to a trading fortress town, he was captured by Irish pirates and sold into slavery for six years, herding sheep here in Ireland. He was indifferent to his faith, but had a spiritual awakening while in Ireland. He would get up before dawn every day and pray. He eventually escaped and returned to his family. He studied for the Priesthood at home, 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 but 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 as One Person. In a kind of similar way as a woman can be three persons in one: a daughter, a mother and a grandmother, at the same time. Or a man can be a son, a father and a grandfather, but still the one person. St. Patrick's image of driving snakes out of Ireland, symbolises him driving the evil presence of Satan out of our hearts and country. When we are bitten by the ancient serpent's poisonous bite of sin, we must go to the sacrament of confession to be healed by divine mercy.

The JESUS CAME TO SAVE THE SINNER

Gospel today (Lk 1:5-11) tells us that without warning, Jesus entered the boat of Peter and began to teach. This was not by chance but by providence. When Jesus enters our hearts and souls, we are given a new orientation in life. Like Peter and St. Patrick, He also gives us an extraordinary mission. He wants to utilise us by proclaiming the Gospel of Truth from the pulpit of our hearts. We are all called, like St. Patrick, to evangelise and to cast out the spiritual net of faith, with the sole purpose of catching unbelieving souls, and those who have lost their faith in Jesus. He asks us to put our trust in Him. When we find Jesus in our heart [boat], we must replace our own freewill with His divine will. We are not to be afraid to live the life that He calls us to live. If St. Patrick did not follow the voice of Jesus, that he heard through the Irish people, then we would never have encountered Jesus Christ and the Way to heaven. Trust Him and we will catch stray souls in need of conversion. This is our mission too, to be partakers of eternal redemption. This is what we will be judged on after we depart this world. In full communion with Jesus and by obeying His instructions, Peter was overcome by the miraculous catch of fish. Full of the Spirit of Truth, and in the presence of Truth, he becomes aware of his sinfulness and says, *Leave me Lord, I'm a sinful man.* For us to be in full communion with Christ, we must acknowledge our own sinfulness, by going to confession. Receiving Holy Communion in Mass, without repenting for our sins, does not make everything okay with Jesus. To receive Him in the state of sin betrays and offends Jesus terribly. Let's not do that. A Blessed St. Patrick's Day!