

**Sunday 17 March 2024**

# St Patrick



Thirteenth-century image of St Patrick confronting King Oengus of Cashel, a High King of Ireland, and piercing the ruler's foot with his crozier.

*Huntington Library, HM 3027 F.40v*

Patrick was born in Celtic Cornwall around the year 390 AD and was captured by Irish raiders when he was sixteen years old and taken to Ireland as a slave. He escaped six years later and went to the Continent. He eventually found his way back to his own family, where his up-till-then-nominal Christian faith grew and matured. He returned to Gaul and trained there as a priest; he was much influenced by the form of monasticism evolving under Martin of Tours. He returned to Ireland as a bishop in his early forties, making Armagh his base, why explains why his See is based there.

Patrick evangelised the people by walking over the entire island, gently bringing men and women to a knowledge of Christ. Although he faced fierce opposition and possible persecution, he continued his missionary journeys. Despite being unsuccessful in his attempts to establish the diocesan system he had experienced in Gaul, his monastic foundations proved to be the infrastructure required to maintain the faith after his death, which occurred on this day in the year 460 AD.

**Sermon** © Nicola Williams.

**Liturgy** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 Be thou my vision**

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**All**    **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All**    **Amen.**

*The Gloria is usually omitted in Lent.*

### **The Collect for St Patrick**

Almighty God,  
who in your providence chose your servant Patrick  
to be the apostle of the Irish people:  
keep alive in us the fire of the faith he kindled  
and strengthen us in our pilgrimage  
    towards the light of everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All**    **Amen.**

**First reading**

A reading from the fifth book of Moses called Deuteronomy

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;  
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.  
May my teaching drop like the rain,  
my speech condense like the dew;  
like gentle rain on grass,  
like showers on new growth.  
For I will proclaim the name of the Lord;  
ascribe greatness to our God!  
The Rock, his work is perfect,  
and all his ways are just.  
A faithful God, without deceit,  
just and upright is he;  
yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,  
a perverse and crooked generation.  
Do you thus repay the Lord,  
O foolish and senseless people?  
Is not he your father, who created you,  
who made you and established you?  
Remember the days of old,  
consider the years long past;  
ask your father, and he will inform you;  
your elders, and they will tell you.  
When the Most High apportioned the nations,  
when he divided humankind,  
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples  
according to the number of the gods;  
the LORD's own portion was his people,  
Jacob his allotted share.

*Deuteronomy 32:1-9*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from the Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you

*2 Corinthians 4:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Jesus is Lord!**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

The disciples were urging Jesus, saying, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see

how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.’

*John 4:31–38*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

St Patrick was a fifth-Century Christian missionary and, later, Bishop of Ireland. He is a complex character who has come to represent many facets of Irish culture and is in fact, so overwhelmingly tied to Irish identity, that his story has become interlaced with folklore and tradition, and his feast day, which is celebrated around the world on 17 March is very much associated with the sense of ‘being Irish’. His amazing journey took him from shepherd to Bishop with much in between ...

Early medieval tradition calls Patrick the founder of Christianity in Ireland, even though there is evidence of Christianity already established before he reached the island. Whatever the truth, Patrick’s remarkable Christian life began when, at the age of sixteen, and as an unbeliever, he claims to have been abducted by pirates and held in slavery for six years, when he was made to work as a shepherd. It was during this time that Patrick first encountered God: he spent his days with the sheep, praying and strengthening his relationship with God. After six years, he heard a voice telling him that he would soon be going home, and that his ship was ready.

It cannot have been easy to go to Ireland, which, at that time, was thought of as being at the ends of civilization—a land of Celts and pagans, of war and violence. As in our Gospel reading, Patrick must have felt that he was ‘being sent out like a sheep into the midst of wolves’. God’s call to preach the message of the Gospel in that setting must have been daunting.

But Patrick was not deterred. He began wandering the land and soon trained helpers and ordained clergy. He claimed to have converted ‘even the sons of kings’, setting up a strong church and monastic foundation. He became the first Bishop of Armagh and tradition has him founding over 300 churches and baptising 100,000 people. He introduced monastic practices and helped to spread Christianity in a land full of Celtic polytheism.

He was, in many ways, preaching a radical message; not just of Christ and salvation but encouraging women to become ‘virgins for Christ’ in a culture where women were held to be little more than possessions; and by preaching the value



of learning and education gained through the reading of the Bible and of other Christian writers—something that was disregarded at that time.

Patrick is probably best known for his teaching using the shamrock; a three-leafed plant which he used to explain the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity—three persons in one God. Icons and images of Patrick often depict him standing with a cross in one hand and a shamrock in the other. Look, for example, at the image of a statue on the front page.

Patrick claimed to have heard God speak to him on several occasions and there are many miracles attributed to him, from prayers for sustenance (answered in the form of a herd of wild boar) to the banishment of snakes from the whole land. There are relics and icons, crosses, and a bell—all of which are linked to Patrick. But no matter how he is bound up in folklore and mystery, we must never forget that this was a man who said of the Irish:

‘Never before did they know of God except to serve idols and unclean things. But now, they have become the people of the Lord and are called children of God. The sons and daughters of the leaders of the Irish are seen to be monks and virgins of Christ’.

We too face a world that worships many things besides God: secular culture and materialism are all around us so it’s often hard to see how we can spread our faith when people simply do not want to hear.

The first step is perhaps, like Patrick, to spend time simply being still and listening to God. Those six years as a shepherd were formative and gave him the spiritual tools he later used in his ministry. Some of St Patrick’s own prayers can be helpful as we try to still ourselves before God. You’ll find a copy of his most famous prayer, his ‘Breastplate’, later in today’s service.

Secondly, we need to be creative in the way we share the Gospel message. Like Patrick, who used the well-known symbol of the shamrock to convey the wonder of the Trinity, we need to find signs and symbols in the modern world that speak to us of God. We have to go to people *where they are* and find where God *is already working in their lives*, rather than impose a model of Church that we may be used to and comfortable with but that means very little to them.

Thirdly, we must remember that not everyone will listen. Patrick faced much opposition, as did Jesus and his disciples; and so will we. Our job is to live the Word of God as Jesus did, and as Patrick tried to follow Him in doing. For ‘the one who endures to the end will be saved’. Patrick’s faith in this was absolute. Let’s pray for ours to grow as strong.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.  
We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

*St Patrick's breastplate*

I arise today  
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,  
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,  
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,  
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.



I arise today  
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,  
In the obedience of angels,  
In the service of archangels,  
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,  
In the prayers of patriarchs,  
In the predictions of prophets,  
In the preaching of apostles,  
In the faith of confessors,  
In the innocence of holy virgins,  
In the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today, through  
The strength of heaven,  
The light of the sun,  
The radiance of the moon,  
The splendour of fire,  
The speed of lightning,  
The swiftness of wind,  
The depth of the sea,  
The stability of the earth,  
The firmness of rock.

I arise today, through  
God's strength to pilot me,  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's eye to look before me,  
God's ear to hear me,  
God's word to speak for me,  
God's hand to guard me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's host to save me  
From snares of devils,  
From temptation of vices,  
From everyone who shall wish me ill,  
afar and near.

I summon today  
All these powers between me and those evils,  
Against every cruel and merciless power  
that may oppose my body and soul,  
Against incantations of false prophets,  
Against black laws of pagandom,  
Against false laws of heretics,  
Against craft of idolatry,  
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,  
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;  
Christ to shield me today  
Against poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against wounding,  
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.

Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

Merciful Father,

**All** accept this prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

## **The peace**

May the God of peace sanctify you:  
may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness  
that you may be blameless before him  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All** And also with you.

**HYMN 3** [St Patrick's breastplate](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## **The Dismissal**

The peace of God which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and mind in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All** Amen.

**HYMN 4** [Jesus paid it all](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All** In the name of Christ. Amen.

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,  
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses  
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you.  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.  
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.  
In communion with angels and archangels,  
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,  
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,  
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with Patrick and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.



**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Holy Father,  
who gathered us here around the table of your Son  
to share this meal with the whole household of God:  
in that new world where you reveal  
the fullness of your peace,  
gather people of every race and language  
to share with your servant Patrick and all your saints  
in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.