

# Saint Patrick's Day



Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated each year on March 17th to honor St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Saint Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to the Irish.

Although it began in Ireland, Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated in countries around the world. People with Irish heritage remind themselves of the beautiful green countryside of Ireland by wearing green and taking part in the festivities. Saint Patrick's Day is usually celebrated with a parade.



St. Patrick was born in Britain. His parents were Christians. Patrick lived a normal life until he was captured by some Irish raiders when he was sixteen years old. He was taken to Ireland and kept as a slave. He watched and herded his master's sheep.

Six years after Patrick was kidnapped, he escaped and found his way back home. It is believed he escaped and traveled many miles to find a ship going back to his homeland.

Patrick studied and became a priest. He stayed in England but often thought of returning to Ireland to convert the people. Pope Celestine asked Patrick to go to bring Christianity to Ireland.

Patrick returned to Ireland and dedicated the rest of his life to helping others. Patrick often used the shamrock to explain about God and the meaning of the Trinity. He taught that the shamrock had one stem but three separate parts. Saint Patrick told the people that the shamrock was like the idea of the Trinity – that in the one God there are three divine beings: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The shamrock was



sacred to the Druids, so Saint Patrick's use of it in explaining the trinity was very wise.

According to legend, St. Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland. Different versions of the story tell of him standing upon a hill, using a wooden staff to drive the serpents into the sea, banishing them forever from Ireland.











One version says that an old serpent resisted banishment, but that Patrick outwitted him. Patrick made a box and invited the snake to enter. The snake insisted it was too small and the two argued. Finally to prove his point, the snake entered the box to show how tight the fit was. Patrick slammed the lid closed and threw the box into the sea.







Although it's true that Ireland has no snakes, this likely had more to do with the fact that Ireland is an island and being separated from the rest of the continent the snakes couldn't get there. The stories of Saint Patrick and the snakes are likely a metaphor for his bringing Christianity to Ireland and driving out the pagan religions (serpents were a common symbol in many of these religions).

March 17 was not the day St. Patrick was born but the day he died. Even though we don't know the date of his birth, most scholars believe the year was 385 AD and the year of his death was 461 AD.

1. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated to honor St. Patrick. True False
2. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Italy. True False
3. What color is traditionally associated with St. Patrick's Day?  
red green blue
4. St. Patrick was born in Britain. True False
5. Ireland has no snakes. True False

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