

# Solemnity of St Patrick

by Kirby Will, Consultant-Formation Identity and Outreach



We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and pay our respects to the Elders past and present. They have loved and respected the land, as it has nurtured them and continues to nurture us. They were the first to care for each other here. They were the first to recognise the possibilities that love offers to all who gather in this ancient and life-giving space. We know that these lands, seas, skies and waterways were, are and will always be those of the First Peoples of the space we now call Australia. In the spirit of Reconciliation and all that is good, we gather to imagine what is possible when Respect, one of the key elements of Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns Encounter Framework, gives way to loving action.

## Context

### St Patrick of Ireland

The solemnity of St Patrick is typically celebrated on the 17th of March, however, this year the 17th falls on a Sunday, so the celebration of St Patrick has moved by a day in the Church calendar. St Patrick is widely celebrated around the world and is associated with all things Irish. However, Patrick himself was not Irish and was a migrant to the island nation. He was born in Roman Britain and his first foray into Ireland was as a slave. Kidnapped at the age of sixteen by Irish pirates, he spent six years working as a herdsman and living in abysmal conditions. During this time, he opened his heart to God and by the time he escaped to France his relationship with God was deeper and more profound. Patrick entered a monastery in France and one night had a dream that the Irish people were calling him to come back. He was ordained Bishop of Ireland before he returned, and he worked tirelessly to bring Jesus to the largely pagan nation. He is often pictured with a shamrock as he was known to use the three leaves and one stem of it to teach about the Holy Trinity. As a result of his efforts, St Patrick is regarded as one of the most influential missionaries in the Church and his influence was so deeply felt that centuries later, he remains a cultural icon for Ireland and its people. There is a particular interest and devotion to St Patrick in Australia, given our rich Irish migrant heritage



St Patrick. Illustration. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, Dec 06 2017. [quest.eb.com/images/108\\_2284745](http://quest.eb.com/images/108_2284745). Accessed 15 Mar 2024.

## Scripture

### Responsorial Psalm 116

**Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.**

O praise the Lord, all you nations, acclaim him all you peoples!

**Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.**

Strong is his love for us; he is faithful for ever.

**Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.**

## Reflection by Kirby Will Consultant Formation Identity and Outreach Directorate

The Responsorial Psalm for the Solemnity of Saint Patrick is quite short yet has an important message for us as followers of Christ. In Australia we live in a society where faith is expected to be a private affair and has no place in the public sphere. In fact, faith is often met with hostility in our society. This is something that was all too familiar to Saint Patrick as the Pagans met his faith with hostility and reluctance.

Nevertheless, Saint Patrick persevered in his mission to turn hearts to God and serves as a reminder for us to do the same in our lives.

The Psalm calls us to go out to all the world, not just the parts of it that agree with us and are easy to interact with. It also reminds us of the strength of God's love for us. As we head towards the end of our Lenten journeys we might reflect and conclude that our Lent, or our family's Lent, has not turned out as we anticipated, or perhaps we fell short in some areas. The early stages of Saint Patrick's life certainly did not match what one would expect of someone who came to spread the message of God so fervently! The Good News is that God's love for us is stronger than our Lenten mishaps and God remains invested in us despite our shortcomings. It is apt that the Church's celebration of Saint Patrick should fall in Lent as we ourselves are encountering a period of conversion of heart. May we use the example of Saint Patrick to remind us of the importance of sharing the Good News and to inspire our hearts to share it through our words and actions as we interact with the world.

### Prayer

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.

*-St Patrick's Breastplate: Prayer for Protection.*

Read a longer version of this prayer [here](#).



*St Patrick of Ireland (gouache on paper). Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. [quest.eb.com/images/108\\_1095396](http://quest.eb.com/images/108_1095396). Accessed 15 Mar 2024.*

### Call to Action

- One night this week, why not pray the [longer version](#) of St Patrick's Breastplate together as a family.
- Get crafty and create a [Trinity Shamrock](#).
- Discuss ways each member of your family could go out and tell the Good News.

