

ST PATRICK'S DAY

St. Patrick, whose life and faith we celebrate today, is a wonderful example of one who cooperated fully with God's grace.

As a young lad, he found himself, a wretched slave, starved of the love of family, friends and home - forced to herd animals on a cold mountainside in an alien land.

It was there however, in that least promising of settings, that Patrick like the desert fathers, encountered the love of God. In his Confessions he writes, "The Lord there made me aware of my unbelief that I might at last (Turn away from) my sins and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord my God..." (Confessions §1)

In this deserted setting, Patrick learned how to embrace the grace of God. He did so first, by becoming a person of prayer. Again in his Confessions he writes, "... I prayed frequently during the day; the love of God ... increased more and more, and faith became stronger ... before daylight I used to rise to prayer, through snow, through frost, through rain ... because the spirit was then fervent within me." (Confessions §6)

Patrick's love of God came to shape his whole life. When he eventually escaped his captivity and returned to his homeland, he committed his life to God's service, first as a priest and then as a missionary. Although he undoubtedly would have loved to continue sharing the company of his family and friends, he answered God's call, returning to the land of his captivity. This time however Patrick travelled to Ireland as a humble slave of Christ, doing the will of God from his heart (Eph. 6:6).

Speaking of this mission, Patrick declared, "I am bound by the Spirit ... Christ the Lord ... commanded me to come to be with them (The Irish) for the rest of my life."

From these most humble of beginnings, the seed of faith sown by Patrick and his fellow missionaries, grew into the great tree of our Irish Church.

"anything I achieved was not through my effort, it was the gift of God and this is my confession before I die." (Confessions§25)

Rev. Kevin Webb

This same invitation given by the Lord to Patrick, has also been given to us. Pope Benedict encourage us, "Do not be afraid of Christ. He takes nothing away and He gives you everything... Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ - And you will find true life. Amen"

Like Patrick before us, we too can become so much more than we are, if we learn to cooperate with God's grace. So let us, in these months of relative isolation brought about by the Coronavirus, remember the lad on that cold mountainside, and through his intercession learn to turn to God in prayer.