

Dear Brothers and Sisters



It has been one year since the lock down began. I am writing this column for the bulletin on Saint Patrick's Day. It was exactly a year ago today that I remember everything beginning. A year ago, we were told that it would take two weeks to flatten the curve. Remember that? Two weeks became a month, a month turned into two months, which turned into an entire summer, which has now lasted for a whole year.

The pandemic has confirmed two things: our mortality, and the fact that we are not in control of our lives.

This is either a curse or a blessing. For those who are in Christ everything contributes to their good. Everything! We can experience a Blessing even in the midst of a Pandemic.

This was certainly the experience of Saint Patrick, who lived 1500 years ago. Kidnapped at age 16 by Irish pirates from the west coast of Britain, most probably from Wales, he was enslaved for six years and suffered cold and hunger as he tended the animals out on the hills and mountains of Ireland.

He escaped his captivity at age 21 yrs. and went back to Britain and then on to France where he studied.

Patrick describes how he never forget his time in Ireland and the people he had met there. He had a dream of a man coming from Ireland. The man handed him a letter

with the heading Vox Hiberniae - The Voice of the Irish. He said that as he read the letter, he heard the people he had known in Ireland calling to him: 'We beg you, holy boy, to come and walk among us once again.' He wrote: "It completely broke my heart, and I could read no more and woke up." Patrick said that the dream left him in no doubt as to what he had to do, return to Ireland to preach the Gospel and convert the Irish to Christianity.

He did return to Ireland, not to seek vengeance on those who had held him captive, but to share with them the love of God which he had experienced. What we do know of his life with certainty is from his own writings, especially his Confessio and his Lorica - also known as the Breastplate of Saint Patrick. May this prayer of Saint Patrick, and his experience of Christ, be ours today:

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

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

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 in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.

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

Amen

Fr. Sean