

Reflection Wednesday Lent 4 St Patrick's Feast 2021

We owe so much to St Patrick and yet his contribution to the life of the Church and to spirituality is far from fully recognised. Taken captive and made a slave by the Irish, he learned to love them. After his escape he yearned to return to open them to the good news and love of Jesus Christ. Patrick followed a practice embraced by the early church not to stamp out pagan religions but to Christianise them. Christmas is one example of this. Patrick realised that the druid customs and beliefs around the sanctity and the presence of the divine in creation was a valuable asset in both preaching and living the faith. He realised that while we are created in the image of God, creation was a valuable and essential reflection of its Creator - God. Creation is a living bible to which all can relate and understand. If this spiritual tradition had continued in the Church, the world and creation would not be in the horrendous state it is today. In many primitive and early cultures, animals, trees and other elements of the natural world became the mouth-piece of God's wisdom, not just in words but in example. Jesus often used examples from the natural world, plants, food, mountains, water, seas, rivers, wind, rain, fire, in helping his followers appreciate the strength and power of God's love for them. The natural world is a great teacher about harmony and togetherness, about care and compassion, about the integral connection between everyone and everything. The song sung by creation has a beauty of its own. It has the ability to help and teach us to pray. Take a walk outside through the countryside and allow nature to pray with you and for you and inspire prayer within you. After all prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God which the natural world helps us do so easily.

Words of wisdom from St Patrick:

- May the strength of God pilot us, may the wisdom of God instruct us, may the hand of God protect us, may the word of God direct us. Be always ours this day and for evermore.
- I arise today through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun
Brilliance of moon
Splendour of fire
Speed of lightning
Swiftness of wind
Depth of sea
Stability of earth
Firmness of rock.
- God watched over me before I knew God, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and God protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son.
- Christ in the heart of everyone 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 prayed in the woods and on the mountain, even before dawn. I felt no hurt from the snow or ice or rain.