

Reflection Monday Week 2 Lent St Patrick 2025

St Patrick was born in Roman Britain around the end of the 4th century, and died in Ireland about the middle of the 5th century. As a missionary bishop, he endured many hardships and faced opposition even from his friends and fellow Christians. Nevertheless, he worked hard to conciliate, to evangelize, and to educate local chieftains and their families. He is remembered for his simplicity and pastoral care, for his humble trust in God, and for his fearless preaching of the gospel to the very people who had enslaved him in his youth.

In the Confessions of Saint Patrick, he tells of the two distinct periods of his life in Ireland: first as a slave, serving an earthly master, and later as a servant of the Lord, fulfilling his calling as a bishop. Though his family were very committed Christians (his father a deacon and his grandfather a priest) Patrick admits that, at the time of his capture by pirates aged sixteen, he was spiritually indifferent and had turned away from God.

During his captivity in Ireland Patrick underwent a profound spiritual awakening. He experienced a deepening of faith that transformed his outlook on suffering. He describes himself as being *“like a stone lying in the deepest mire”* until God, in His mercy, *“raised me up.”* Patrick speaks of how his hardship became a blessing in disguise, kindling a fervent prayer life and a newfound awareness of God’s presence. *“I prayed frequently each day,”* he writes, *“and more and more the love of God and the fear of Him grew in me.”* Even in the harsh conditions of rain, hail, or snow, he rose before dawn to pray, recognising that the Spirit was alive within him during those difficult years.

After six years of enslavement, he escaped and eventually returned to his family in Britain. His parents pleaded with him to stay. However, God’s call to Patrick was not yet complete. He recounts a vision in which a man named Victorinus brought him countless letters. As he read them, he believed he heard the voices of the Irish people crying out: *“O holy boy, we beg you to come again and walk among us.”* Compelled by this call, Patrick was ordained a priest and later appointed bishop, returning to the very land where he had been enslaved. Reflecting on his life’s mission, Patrick recognised that both his arrival in Ireland as a captive and his later return as a missionary were not his own doing. In the closing words of his Confessions, he humbly acknowledges: *“It is not I but Christ the Lord who has ordered me to come here and be with these people for the rest of my life.”*