

# SAINT PATRICK

## APOSTLE OF IRELAND FEAST DAY ~ MARCH 17<sup>TH</sup>



Present day Old Kilpatrick, Scotland, the birthplace of St. Patrick



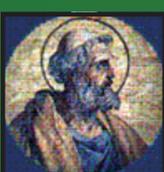
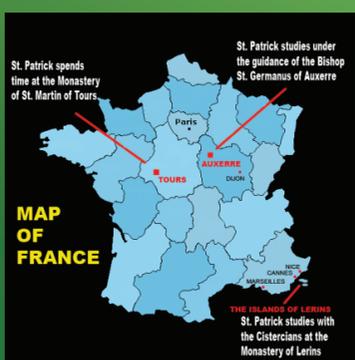
St. Patrick boards a ship to escape



St. Martin of Tours was a relative of St. Patrick's mother, Concessa. St. Patrick studies at his monastery for a while.



St. Patrick then receives further training under Bishop St. Germanus at Auxerre, France.



Pope Celestine I chooses St. Patrick as the replacement for Palladius in the task of converting the Irish tribes.



St. Patrick returns to Ireland's shores around the year 432-433. This was to be the start of the gradual conversion and baptism of the Irish tribes.

**T**he Apostle of Ireland, was born at Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton, in Scotland, in the year 387; and died at Saul, Downpatrick, Ireland, on March 17th, 493. His father, Calphurnius, belonged to a Roman family of high rank. His mother, Concessa, was a near relative of the great patron of Gaul, St. Martin of Tours.

Kilpatrick still retains many memorials of Saint Patrick, and frequent pilgrimages continued far into the Middle Ages to perpetuate there the fame of his sanctity and miracles. In his sixteenth year, Patrick was carried off into captivity by Irish marauders and was sold as a slave to a chieftan named Milchu in Dalriada, a territory of the present county of Antrim in Ireland, where for six years he tended his master's flocks near the modern town of Ballymena.

He relates in his "Confessions" that during his captivity while tending the flocks he prayed many times in the day: *"the love of God"*, he added, *"and His fear increased in me more and more, and the faith grew in me, and the spirit was roused, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same, whether there was snow or ice or rain."*

By Providence the six years of Patrick's captivity became a preparation for his future apostolate. He acquired a perfect knowledge of the Celtic tongue in which he would one day convert thousands, and, as his master Milchu was a druidical high priest, he became familiar with all the details of Druidism from whose bondage he was destined to liberate the Irish race. After six years, commanded by an angel, he fled from his cruel master and fled towards the west. He relates in his "Confessions" that he had to travel about 200 miles; and his journey was probably towards Killala Bay and onwards to Westport. He found a ship ready to set sail and was allowed on board. In a few days he was among his friends once more in Britain, but now his heart was set on devoting himself to the service of God in the sacred ministry.

We meet with him at St. Martin's monastery at Tours, and again at the island sanctuary of Lérins which was just then acquiring widespread renown for learning and piety; and wherever lessons of heroic perfection in the exercise of Christian life could be acquired, thither the fervent Patrick was sure to bend his steps. No sooner had St. Germanus entered on his great mission at Auxerre than Patrick put himself under his guidance, and it was at that great bishop's hands that Ireland's future apostle was a few years later promoted to the priesthood. Patrick's thoughts turned towards Ireland, and from time to time he was favoured with visions of the children from Focluth, by the Western sea, who cried to him: *"O holy youth, come back to Erin, and walk once more amongst us."*

Pope St. Celestine entrusted St. Patrick with the mission of gathering the Irish race into the one fold of Christ. Palladius had already received that job, but, terrified by the fierce opposition of an Irish chieftain, had abandoned his work and fled. It was St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, who commended Patrick to the pope. St. Patrick hastened on to Auxerre to make under the guidance of St. Germanus due preparations for the Irish mission. It was probably in the summer months of the year 433, that Patrick and his companions landed at the mouth of the Vantry River close by Wicklow Head.

Now the battle for Ireland was about to start! On the one side was the representative of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church—St. Patrick! On the other side were the followers of Satan, in the form of Druid priests and pagan kings! Humility versus pride! Meekness versus anger! Heaven versus Hell!

*(this is only the first of several posters on the history of St. Patrick)*

