

History of St. Patrick's Day

Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is Ireland's patron saint. Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated by the Irish to commemorate his arrival in Ireland and death on March 17, 493 A.D. It is one of the only national holidays that is celebrated around the world.



St. Patrick was reportedly born in 373 A.D. in Scotland or Britain. His true name was thought to be Maewyn Succat. He changed his name to Patrick after becoming ordained a priest. At the age of 16, he was kidnapped by the Irish and was forced into slavery; he was told to work as a shepherd and work hand. While he was a slave he had visions of his faith in God and found strength and trust in them. He escaped after six years and went to France to become a priest.

After his seminary education, he went back to Ireland to convert peoples from paganism to Christianity. He founded many churches and eventually became a bishop. Rumor has it that St. Patrick used shamrock leaves to explain the meaning of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost). Shamrocks are considered good luck charms because of his demonstrations. It is also written that St. Patrick banished snakes from Ireland; some say this explains why there are no snakes on the island.

About the Shamrock

The shamrock has been connected to St. Patrick's Day and his teaching because of his use of the plant in converting pagans. He is said to have preached about the Trinity by plucking a shamrock from the grass at his feet and showing it to the people gathered to listen to his sermon. The luck of the shamrock is also evidenced by the fact that snakes are rarely seen on beds of clover (shamrock) and that there are medicinal purposes for the grass. The legend of the shamrock is also related to the Persian emblem of the triads. It was known as "shamrakh" in the Arabian Peninsula.