

I am Patrick

Read before the Mass

Commentator:

I am Ireland –from me they draw their substance,  
And I from them; the Chieftains and the Druids,  
The landsmen and the bards, the farmers and the shopmen,  
The saints and the sages. They draw from me,  
And I from them,  
I am Ireland.

Patrick:

I am Patrick.

As a young man, I knew not the true God; I was led into captivity with many thousand of others who turned away from God and were not obedient to our priests. The Lord scattered us amongst many nations, where my littleness would be seen by strangers.

There the Lord opened the understanding of my unbelief so that at length I might be converted with all of my heart to the Lord, my God. He protected me and consoled me as a father does a son.

My faith grew, my spirit thrived, for the spirit of God was warm within me.

Commentator:

He came from a stranger, but left as an Irishman; formed by his life, its language, and its spirit.

After seven years as a slave in Ireland, Patrick made his escape and returned to his family. But he could find no peace for thinking of the country and the people that had grown into his soul and had become his. In a dream they called to him.

Patrick:

I heard the voice of those who dwell in Ireland. They cried as with one voice: “We pray thee, holy youth, to come and walk among us as before.”

With this I was pierced to the heart. I woke and knew this to be the voice of God speaking to me through these people.

Commentator:

So Patrick, staff in hand, returned to Ireland prepared to do God's bidding and bring the faith of the true cross to the people he loved.

It was in the east of Ireland Patrick landed during a great Pagan feast. He challenged the Druid taboo forbidding anyone to light a fire until the great roaring fire was lit by the Druid high priest on the Hill of Tara.

In the stillness and the darkness of the night, Patrick struck the flame of the Easter Paschal fire, and the astounded people saw its glow. The blinding lightness of the light lit the whole of the hill on which Patrick prayed.

Seeing it, the Druid said: "unless this fire is quenched before the dawn on this, the night it was kindled, its light will never go out."