

St Patrick c 390 – 461 14th March

Although closely associated with Ireland Patrick was born in the north of Britain to a Christian family. He was captured by Irish pirates and worked as a slave for six years before escaping and managing to make his way back to his family and begin training for the priesthood, although his education was limited. Finally in 435 he made his way back to the north of Ireland, basing himself at Armagh and making missionary journeys from there.

Fortunately his own writings survive; an autobiography (*Confessio*), a letter protesting the slave trade, and probably also the "Breastplate", a prayer for protection. The "Breastplate" is often known by its opening words; in English "I bind unto myself today". It is referred to as a *lorica* - literally "armour" prayer (Full text below).

Ephesians 6

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Patrick's writings reveal deep concern for his flock, and a determination to fight against paganism and idolatry at all levels, together with a willingness to suffer for the Gospel. Patrick, his adopted name (he was originally Maewyn Succat) means "the fatherly one". He has come to not only represent the many missionaries to Ireland, but has been credited with semi-magical powers inconsistent with his own humility and practicality. Similarly a number of items have come to be associated with him which actually belong to later dates.

In art he is always shown as a Bishop, again in the vestments typical of much later practices. In relatively recent images he holds a shamrock, alluding to the legend that he used the three lobes of the clover leaf to try to teach about the Trinity.



Contemporary window
by Mark Bleakley,
Tennessee



All Saints Episcopal Church
San Francisco
? early 20th

Although he is now associated with the colour green as in the windows below from St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne created by the English firm of Hardmann and Co around 1868, the earliest depictions regularly show him in blue, as in the painted initial from *La Vie des Sains* (c 1225 -1250, a manuscript once owned by Henry VII). Green was adopted as "the" Irish colour only from 1641.



*I arise today
 Through a mighty strength, the
 invocation of the Trinity,
 Through belief in the Threeness,
 Through confession of the Oneness
 of the Creator of creation.
 I arise today
 Through the strength of Christ's birth
 with His baptism,
 Through the strength of His
 crucifixion with His burial,
 Through the strength of His
 resurrection with His ascension,
 Through the strength of His descent
 for the judgment of doom.
 I arise today
 Through the strength of the love of
 cherubim,
 In the obedience of angels,
 In the service of archangels,*

*In the hope of resurrection to meet
 with reward,
 In the prayers of patriarchs,
 In the predictions of prophets,
 In the preaching of apostles,
 In the faith of confessors,
 In the innocence of holy virgins,
 In the deeds of righteous men.
 I arise today, through
 The strength of heaven,
 The light of the sun,
 The radiance of the moon,
 The splendour of fire,
 The speed of lightning,
 The swiftness of wind,
 The depth of the sea,
 The stability of the earth,
 The firmness of rock.*

*I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.
I summon today
All these powers between me and
those evils,
Against every cruel and merciless
power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false
prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths
and wizards,
Against every knowledge that
corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an
abundance of reward.*

*Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man 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 arise today
Through a mighty strength, the
invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.*