The Feast of St. Patrick
March 17

March 17 is the Feast Day of Saint Patrick, one of the Church's great evangelizing saints. Although he is the patron saint of Ireland, Saint Patrick was actually born in Roman Britain in the fifth century. When he was a teenager, he was captured by Irish raiders and taken to Ireland as a slave to herd and tend sheep. It was during this time, that he discovered his own faith, finding strength through his relationship with God.

Saint Patrick's enslavement lasted for six years until he had a dream in which he was told to escape by going by way of the coast. He successfully made it back to Britain, but after a few years, he had a vision in which a man came to him from Ireland and gave him a letter with the heading '"The Voice of the Irish." In his spiritual autobiography, the Confessio, Saint Patrick said that, at that moment, he heard the Irish people crying out, "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us."

It led Patrick to further his education and study for the priesthood. He would later be ordained a bishop and was appointed as successor to Saint Palladius, the first bishop of Ireland. Saint Patrick spent the rest of his life bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the people of Ireland, which was a pagan country at the time. He is believed to have used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity, and the shamrock remains associated with the saint and the Trinity to this day.

The prayer "Breastplate" is attributed to Saint Patrick. It reads in part: "Christ be within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ inquired, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."

Saint Patrick died on March 17, 461. He is now the patron saint of Ireland and is known as the Apostle of Ireland.

Excerpt from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland