

First Baptist Footprints ~ March 2015

The Real St. Patrick & "Be Thou My Vision Stories"

One of my favorite holidays is St. Patrick's Day. I think because it's close to my birthday, spring is just around the corner, and my great grandfather hailed from the Emerald Isle! I've always wanted to know the story of St. Patrick and the snakes, so I did some digging in Christianity Today magazine. I also found out the story behind one of my favorite hymns. Following is a short history of both:

'Tis the season for parades, green beer, shamrocks, and articles talking about why St. Patrick's day isn't all about parades, green beer, and shamrocks.

First, a few misconceptions about Patrick:



Patrick isn't really a Saint with a capital S, having never been officially canonized by Rome. And Patrick couldn't have driven the snakes out of Ireland because there were never any snakes

there to begin with. He wasn't even the first evangelist to Ireland (Palladius had been sent in 431, about five years before Patrick went). Patrick isn't even Irish. He's from what's now Dumbarton, Scotland (just northwest of Glasgow).

Patrick was 16 years old in about the year 405, when he was captured in a raid and became a slave in what was still radically pagan Ireland. Far from home, he clung to the religion he had ignored as a teenager. Even though his grandfather had been a priest, and his father a town councilor, Patrick "knew not the true God." But forced to tend his master's sheep in Ireland, he spent his six years of bondage mainly in prayer. He escaped at the suggestion of a dream and returned home.

Patrick was in his mid-40s when he returned to Ireland. Palladius had not been very successful in his mission, and the returning former slave replaced him. Intimately familiar with the Irish clan system (his former master, Milchu, had been a chieftain), Patrick's strategy was to convert chiefs first, who would then convert their clans through their influence. Reportedly, Milchu was one of his earliest converts.

Though he was not solely responsible for converting the island, Patrick was quite successful. He made missionary journeys all over Ireland, and it soon became known as one of Europe's Christian centers. This, of course, was very important to fifth-century Christians, for whom Ireland was one of the "ends of the earth."

The Story of "Be Thou My Vision":

Millions worldwide have found in the humble prayer text and lyric tune "Be Thou My Vision" a vehicle for praise and worship. It offers a singular voice of fierce devotion rooted in medieval Celtic Christianity that is still relevant today. The eighth-century prayer was composed in Old Irish:

Rob tu mo bhoile,
a Comdi cride.
Ni ni nech aile,
acht ri secht nime ...

Only in this century did this text find its English translation. Mary Byrne rendered it into literal English prose in 1905.

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### Prayer & Praise Evening

Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm

Come enjoy the song & fellowship!

