

5th/6th

St. Patrick and King Laoghaire

God asked St. Patrick to return to Ireland and spread the message about Christianity throughout the country. At that time Ireland was a pagan country ruled by Celtic druids and a High King called Laoghaire, who lived in Tara, County Meath. The Celtic people had their own laws and customs and worshipped pagan gods.

In the beginning St. Patrick's words fell on deaf ears. The Celtic people didn't want to hear about God, and the druids felt threatened by what St. Patrick had to say. But Patrick was brave and determined and continued with his preaching. The Celtic feast of Bealtaine (The Feast of Fires) was a major festival to celebrate the beginning of summer and the triumph over dark powers. Traditionally, Ireland's High King would light a fire on the top of the Hill of Tara at this time, and this fire would then be used to light all other fires. So, when St Patrick lit a fire on the Hill of Slane to mark the Christian celebration of the Resurrection at Easter, in advance of High King Laoghaire lighting his fire, the High King was not happy. The Hill of Slane could be seen from the Hill of Tara. So Laoghaire sent the druids to investigate and they reported back that St. Patrick's fire had magical powers because they could not put it out. They warned that if the King did not extinguish Patrick's fire, it would burn forever.

King Laoghaire couldn't extinguish the fire, so he sent for St. Patrick. He was very impressed with what St. Patrick told him about God, about the Trinity, and about how God sent Jesus to show us how to live and how to love, and he converted to Christianity. He gave Patrick permission to travel freely throughout Ireland doing his missionary work, and gradually the people of Ireland became Christians.

St. Patrick was clever. When he was teaching about Christianity, he often began by linking his teaching to existing Celtic customs. For example, St. Patrick knew that the shamrock was already a sacred plant to the Celts, so he used it to teach about the mystery of the Trinity - that there are Three Persons in the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He held a shamrock high and said, 'Do you see how this shamrock has three leaves that are united on one stalk? In the same way, the Three Persons of the Trinity are united in one God?'

1. What image of *God* do you have? How would you explain *God* in our life?

Read the words of this prayer

St. Patrick's Breastplate

Christ be with me,
Christ be beside me,
Christ be before me,
Christ be behind me.
Christ be at my right hand,
Christ be at my left hand,
Christ be with me wherever I go,
Christ be my friend, forever and ever. Amen

Write a prayer for all who live in Ireland