



Saint Patrick's Day (Irish: *Lá Fhéile Pádraig*) is the feast day which annually celebrates Saint Patrick (386-493), the patron saint of Ireland, on March 17th. It is a national holiday in the Republic of Ireland (but not Northern Ireland, where it is a bank holiday); the overseas territory of Montserrat; and the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated worldwide by Irish people and increasingly by many of non-Irish descent. Celebrations are generally themed around all things green and Irish; both Christians and non-Christians celebrate the secular version of the holiday by wearing green, eating Irish food and imbibing Irish drink, and attending parades. The St. Patrick's Day parade in Dublin, Ireland is part of a five day festival, with over 500,000 people attending the 2006 parade. The largest St. Patrick's Day parade is held in New York City and it is watched by 2 million spectators. The St. Patrick's day parade was first held in New York City on March 17th, 1762 when the Irish soldiers marched through the city. Parades also take place in other Irish towns and villages. Other large parades include those in Belfast, Manchester, Birmingham, London, Montreal, Boston, Chicago, Savannah, Denver and Scranton and Toronto. Large parades also take place in other places throughout Europe and the Americas, as well as Australia and Asia.

As well as being a celebration of Irish culture, Saint Patrick's Day is a Christian festival celebrated in the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland (among other churches in the Anglican Communion) and some other denominations. The day always falls in the season of Lent. In church calendars (though rarely in secular ones) Saint Patrick's Day is moved to the following Monday when it falls on a Sunday. It is traditional for those observing a lenten fast to break it for the duration of Saint Patrick's Day.^[1]

In many parts of North America, Britain, and Australia, expatriate Irish, those of Irish descent, and ever-growing crowds of people with no Irish connections but who may proclaim themselves "Irish for a day" also celebrate St. Patrick's Day, usually by drinking alcoholic beverages (lager dyed green, Irish beer and stout, such as Murphys, Smithwicks, Harp or Guinness, or Irish whiskey, Irish Cider, Irish Coffee or Baileys Irish Cream) and by wearing at least one article of green-colored clothing.



The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385. His given name was Maewyn, and he almost didn't get the job of bishop of Ireland because he lacked the required scholarship.

Far from being a saint, until he was 16, he considered himself a pagan. At that age, he was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders that raided his village. During his captivity, he became closer to God.

He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in the monastery under St. Germain, bishop of Auxerre for a period of twelve years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert the pagans to Christianity.

His wishes were to return to Ireland, to convert the native pagans to Christianity. But his superiors instead appointed St. Palladius. But two years later, Palladius transferred to Scotland. Patrick, having adopted that Christian name earlier, was then appointed as second bishop to Ireland.

Patrick was quite successful at winning converts. And this fact upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times, but escaped each time. He traveled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid him in his conversion of the Irish country to Christianity.

His mission in Ireland lasted for thirty years. After that time, Patrick retired to County Down. He died on March 17th in AD 461. That day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since.

Much Irish folklore surrounds St. Patrick's Day. Not much of it is actually substantiated.

Some of this lore includes the belief that Patrick raised people from the dead. He also is said to have given a sermon from a hilltop that drove all the snakes from Ireland. Of course, no snakes were ever native to Ireland, and some people think this is a metaphor for the conversion of the pagans. Though originally a Catholic holy day, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into more of a secular holiday.

One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. And this stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.

The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737. That was the first year St. Patrick's Day was publicly celebrated in this country, in Boston.

Today, people celebrate the day with parades, wearing of the green, and drinking beer. One reason St. Patrick's Day might have become so popular is that it takes place just a few days before the first day of spring. One might say it has become the first green of spring.

St. Patrick's Day Quiz

Question 1: If you're out looking for a pot of gold, and you come across a leprechaun with a shillelagh, (pronounced: sha-lay'-li) that would mean he:

- a. Is carrying a big stick.
- b. Has a four-leaf clover.
- c. Is walking a pot-bellied pig.

Question 2: Which of the following animal legends is told about St. Patrick?

- a. He chased away rats by playing his flute.
- b. He could talk to the birds.
- c. He drove the snakes out of Ireland.

Question 3: Legend has it that if you kiss the Blarney Stone, you will:

- a. Have seven years' bad luck.
- b. Gain the "gift of gab."
- c. Turn green.

Question 4: The name Patrick is derived from the Latin for:

- a. "Father of his people."
- b. "Hunter of snakes."
- c. "Brilliant light."

Question 5: The expression Erin Go Braugh means:

- a. Kiss me, I'm Irish.
- b. Ireland forever.
- c. Everybody's Irish.

Saint Patrick's Day Word Search

V G D H V C T Z K Q W P V A R
X Z L U S I F O S Y O C Q D Q
Y C E Q B P A N O T B N B R Z
L E P E H L A H O Q N J V A K
N L R U K K I F S E I X C C O
A T E J E C G N E I A M I L I
N I C S X O I R P Y R R T U D
F C H M L N G R V R T I N A S
A A A D J S I H E A H E I N N
N T U X Z M D F P M W P A V L
N D N E G E L W N B I U S U P
N T J W W K L Q U C H L Y U P
J B Q A P F Z O K U N Q O J X
I W I N B I R E L A N D G S Y
J D C K C O R M A H S Y B Z X



CELTIC
IRELAND
LEPRECHAUN
POTOFGOLD
SHAMROCK

DUBLIN
IRISH
LIMERICK
RAINBOW
SNAKES

GREEN
LEGEND
PATRICK
SAINT

