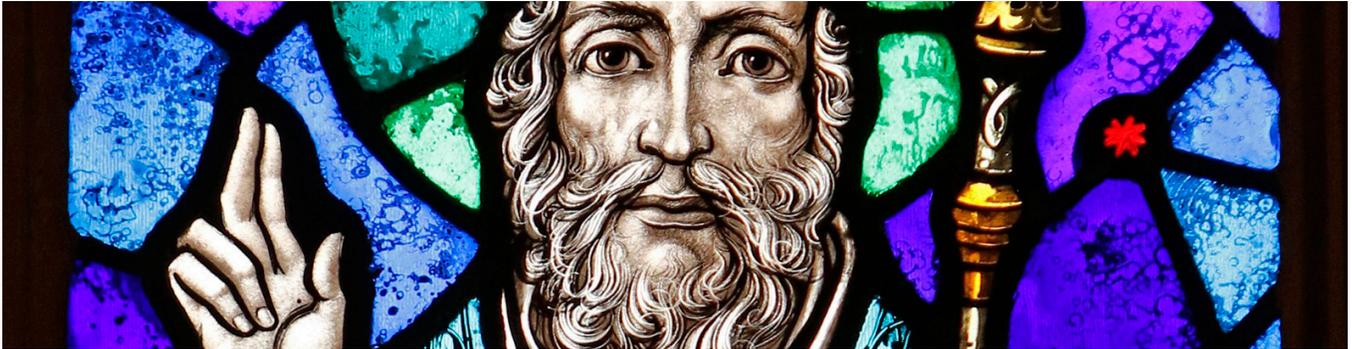




St. Patrick and Slavery



St. Patrick, known in his time as Patricius, was a Roman Briton, credited (as we know) with the evangelization of Ireland. Under his gentle teaching, Ireland became the first nation fully evangelized outside of the Roman sphere. The Irish weren't led to convert under military threat or political expediency. The Gospel simply came alive in him. And though he was not an Irishman by birth, the Irish Diaspora the world over celebrates their kinship to him.

But they are not the only ones who share a spiritual bond with St. Patrick. St. Patrick, like so many of our exploited brothers and sisters worldwide, was a victim of what we now call human trafficking. And he was one of the first great Christian voices against human trafficking's brutal cousin, slavery, as he became a slave.

When St. Patrick was about sixteen, he was captured by raiders and brought to what is now considered to be Antrim, where he was sold as chattel to a chieftain

and put into forced service as a shepherd. In his voice, we hear that of trafficking victims of all faiths, clinging in spirit to the severed connections of family and culture to sustain them in their duress.

I, in my smallness, am now to be found among foreigners.

St. Patrick eventually escaped, and (after brief recapture) reunited with his family. He began, upon his return, studying for the priesthood and serving God in thanks. He would come to eventually receive his vocation literally, hearing a voice: "Come, holy boy, and walk amongst us again," leading him to return to Ireland and bring the word of Christ to the people who had so wronged him. In his capture, escape, and reunion with his family, St. Patrick first became a colossus in the eternal human story that is the struggle against human trafficking and slavery, and in his return to Ireland, he then he became a colossus in the eternal human story that is the struggle for reconciliation.

Knowing "St. Patrick's Breastplate" comes from the voice of a slave helps us truly see what its author was truly asking for as he prayed.

Christ be in the heart of everyone who thinks of me

Christ be in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me

Christ be in every eye that sees me

Christ be in every ear that hears me

This St. Patrick's Day, we ask that you keep the victims of human trafficking in your heart. We ask for the intercession of St. Patrick, as we pray for victims of human trafficking everywhere.

For more information about how Catholic Relief Services works to end human trafficking, visit www.crs.org/get-involved/learn/slavery-and-human-trafficking.