

# Are There Two St. Patricks?

What famous person was kidnaped at age 16 and sold as a slave? Who was told in a vision he would become the voice of the Irish? Who used the shamrock to explain the Trinity?

Magonus Sucatus Patricius, that's who. And a Happy St. Patrick's Day to those who passed the quiz.

A question about St. Patrick that few people ever answer right is about his birthplace. "Many people find it hard to believe that St. Patrick was not born in Ireland," says Robert T. Meyer, professor emeritus of Celtic and Comparative Philology at The Catholic University of America.

Patrick, born in Roman Britain, was kidnaped by Irish raiders when he was 16 and taken to Ireland where he was sold as a slave to the druid Miliuc maccu Boin. Patrick had spend six years herding sheep when he saw a vision telling him that he would be the voice of the Irish. He escaped, returned to his home, and entered a monastery to study.

The source of this information is St. Patrick's Confessions, says Meyer. "St. Patrick's confessions don't actually tell what he did wrong. They are a defense of what he did in Ireland: the conversion of the Irish to Christianity."

Meyer takes a hard line on the legend that St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland. "That's nonsense!" he exclaims. "The reason there is no animal life in Ireland, as the geologists will tell you, is because Ireland broke off from the continent."

"A lot of people believe there had to be two St. Patricks," says Meyer. "The group that believes he died in 461 celebrated his 1500th anniversary in 1961. The other group, which places Patrick's death in 490, will be preparing for a celebration in 1990," explains Meyer.

One reason for thinking there were two Patricks is the incredible amount of work that is attributed to him, says Meyer. "It's like the story about George Washington who just couldn't have slept in as many beds as people claim. So many bishops and priests were said to have been ordained by Patrick, and he is thought to have laid out so many boundaries . . . it just doesn't seem possible. Laying out the boundaries of the church or monastery buildings was the job of the bishop in the 5th century. The bishop took his crozier and drew the boundaries."

According to Meyer, the legendary guidelines for drawing the boundaries are "where you will find the boar — there you find the refectory, where a lot of eating was done," adds Meyer. "And where you find the doe, you'll build the church."

"But," says Meyer, "it doesn't really matter whether there was one or two Patricks. He is still given credit for the conversion of Ireland. Patrick was on the go all the time. He was a man of action, not interested in learning. He didn't have much education. In his Confessions he says 'I know that I can't write very good Latin.'"

"It's a curious thing," Meyer adds. "People in this country make more of a celebration on St. Patrick's Day than people in Ireland. But Patrick will continue. For over 1,500 years he's gone on."

One possible explanation for Patrick's enduring popularity may stem from one of his last actions before he died. He granted the favor that all who sing his hymn on their last day would be saved by his intercession.

And that may be the luck of the Irish.



# Ah, the Sad Truth of It All, Our Terrance's Dark Secret

By Terrance J. Brennan

"Top o' the mornin'!" "Begorra!" And let's not forget the infamous "Blarney Stone."

Any day now, I'm about to be hit by all my friends and acquaintances on these age-old classic Irish lines that I'm supposed to be an authority on.

I've tried to explain. It's just that many of them are very hard to convince. They can't believe that it's true, and they'll look for every chink in my armor to prove (obviously, to themselves) that I'm the official token Irishman that's about to become their silly-drunk, falling-down bosom buddy come March 17.

The truth is that I'm about as Irish as everybody else in this world. Unfortunately, my monicker leaves everybody chuckling. "Oh, sure. If you're not Irish, then I'm the King of France." I feel very pleased to have so many friends of royal blood.

But it's been this way ever since I can remember, Brennan. I don't know. Maybe a trip to City Hall to change my name will solve my problem. Nah! Too late. Maybe a change of lifestyle will convince the horde that I'm just a stubborn little Scotsman who just happened to get off on the wrong Emerald Isle. Nah! Not worth losing all those friends it took me so long to accumulate.

I guess I'm stuck with it, Brennan. As many times as I've tried to use the truth with them, it seems to act as a spur to

make them rear their heads and roar all the louder.

So, for the people I've never met, and the friends that I hope to add to my ever-growing list someday, here's the "Gospel" truth:

My grandparents on my father's side were both from Scotland. My grandparents on Mom's side were Irish-Canadian and German-Swiss. In fact, my paternal grandparents' name when they entered this country was Brannan. All it took was for some low person in a high place to absent-mindedly change one letter, and now I'm chastised for failing to wear green on St. Patrick's Day, and especially for playing the party-pooper and not being the life of all my friends' parties that celebrated evening.

Life is tough, you know?

Mind you, there's absolutely nothing wrong with being Irish. It's a lot of fun, in fact.

Let's face it, there's not a day named for anyone from Scotland (especially one as prestigious as a saint) that carries with it the worldwide respect and revelry as does St. Patrick's Day.

So "Erin go bragh" and all that jazz. After all, it's just one day out of the year. I can keep up with all those other pseudo-Irishmen for one night. It's probably better that I don't even let on that I'm not Irish. (Shhhhhh!)

By the way, just in case I forget, someone tell the boss that I might be a little late for work on Friday.

## Business in Diocese

Gill Dechario has been named Community Development Director of the School of the Holy Childhood. Mrs. Dechario, widely known in the Rochester community for her organizational activities, will be responsible for public awareness of Holy Childhood's efforts to help mentally retarded children of all races and religions.

## Deadline

Items intended for publication must be typed and in the Courier-Journal offices by noon Thursday before the Wednesday publication. The Courier-Journal is located at 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

### CATHOLIC INTEREST TOURS



Spiritual Director:  
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## McQuaid Swinging Into Bash Season

Imagine an all expense trip to St. Croix for a week of sun, golf, fishing and swimming; or a hot air balloon ride, or dining at the old City Hall or Richardson's Canal House, or owning your own paddle boat? These are just a few of the many services and merchandise to be auctioned at McQuaid's Bash, Friday and Saturday, April 22-23.

This year's Bash marks its 10th anniversary and to celebrate, Pat and Dick Rohrer, chairpersons, have planned a Broadway Bash, Saturday, April 23. Sneak preview of this show, which will be open to McQuaid

family and friends, is Friday night, April 22. There will be no admission charge for the evening that will include hors d'oeuvres and cash bar. Everyone will be able to view the silent auction gifts and purchase art and antique items.

On Saturday, April 23, a variety of complimentary refreshments will be available at 5:30 p.m. when the bidding begins on the silent auction. Following the auction will be dinner served in a theatre-in-the-round motif. The oral auction will begin at 8:30 p.m. with Harris Wilcox as auctioneer.

## Romero Memorial Slated

Gene Palumbo, a broadcaster and journalist covering the pontiff's Central American journey, will be the main speaker at a memorial service commemorating the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 24, at St. Augustine's Church, 410 Chili Ave.

The event is jointly sponsored by the diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission, the Diocese of Rochester, the Ecumenical Mutuality in Mission, and the Rochester Committee on Latin America.

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