



Patrick and the Fire

A Legend about Saint Patrick

written by Cornelia Mary Bilinsky

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Prayer to Saint Patrick

Holy Saint Patrick,
Messenger of Jesus Christ,
you lit a simple fire on a hill
and in so doing,
lit the fire of faith
in the hearts of many people.

Pray for me,
Holy Saint Patrick,
that God may light in *my* heart
a holy fire—
a fire of faith,
a fire of hope,
a fire of love—
which glows brightly day and night.
Help me to know
that Jesus Christ is with me,
within me and around me,
at my right and at my left,
to guide me and to teach me.

In all my deeds and words
help me to shine
with the light of this holy fire
and to pass it on
to all those I meet.

Amen.





Bevan threw his stick impatiently onto the ground. *A goatherd's life is so boring!* That night, though, there would be a festival. A huge bonfire would be lit. The men in the village would try leaping over it. Bevan could hardly wait!



“Hello, lad!” a voice startled him.

Bevan looked at the stranger curiously. He was wearing a long, woolen robe and tattered shoes. A wide cloak draped over his back and a knapsack hung from one shoulder.

“I’m Patrick, come from across the sea,” said the man striding toward him.

“And I’m Bevan, stuck here with these goats!” Patrick chuckled.



“Bevan, can you show me the way to the Hill of Tara?”

“Tara is that way,” Bevan said, pointing. “That’s where the High King lives. But I wouldn’t bother him tonight!” Bevan warned, frowning.

“But I must speak to the king!” Patrick exclaimed. “I’ll help you herd your goats home if you show me the way.”

“You know about herding?” Bevan asked.

Patrick nodded. “When I was a boy, my village was raided. I was captured and brought here to Ireland as a slave. For six years, I looked after my master’s sheep and pigs. Then, I escaped.”

“Why would you ever return to Ireland?” Bevan asked, wide-eyed.

Patrick looked up. “It was here, in these green hills, that I found faith in God. Since then, I’ve had dreams calling me to help the people of this land come to know God too.”





“Which god? Balor, the god of light? Tonight is his festival, you know,” Bevan said.

“No, I am a Christian,” said Patrick. “I worship the living God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

“We have many gods,” said Bevan, “But I’ve never heard of yours.”

Patrick smiled, “That’s why I must see the king. I want to preach to his people.”

“But tonight the High King must light the first fire of the festival!”



Patrick stood thinking. Suddenly he clasped his hands together. “Bevan, you’ve given me an idea. *I* will build a bonfire too. Right here on this hilltop, where everyone can see it!”

Bevan was horrified. “No! The king will be very angry! *He* must light the first bonfire! That’s the law!”



“There is a King above all kings!” said Patrick, firmly. “Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the *true* light of the world and I want everyone to know him!”

“But you might be captured again! You might even be killed!” cried Bevan, “Aren’t you afraid?”

“How can I be afraid?” Patrick replied, putting his hand over his heart. He closed his eyes and chanted the words he had sewn into his robe: “*Christ with me. Christ before me. Christ behind me. Christ on my right and on my left.*”



The prayer sounded strange to Bevan, but he liked it.

Still, Patrick's plan was dangerous. Bevan felt scared.

"I have to go!" he shouted, running after his goats. "But I'll look for you later—if you're still alive!"