

# Miracles in A.D. 400? Would We Call St. Patrick a Charismatic?

The Charismatic Renewal emphasizes a renewal of gifts and miracles in our generation, unlike those who say they ceased after the early church. But if you study history, there were many of each in the church throughout the centuries.

There is no better example than that of Patrick of Ireland, whose holiday we celebrate every March 17. While there are many myths, history records actual miracles. I'm inspired to learn about the real St. Patrick and the miraculous ways God intervened to help him spread the Good News of Jesus to the then-barbaric island of Ireland.

In the fourth century A.D., during an uncertain time period in the Roman Empire, Patrick lived in Britain with his family. Just before he turned 16 years old, Patrick and his family were on holiday by the sea in a town called Bannaventa Berniae.

One day, this little town was attacked by Irish pirates. The pirates captured Patrick, took him to Ireland and sold him to Miliuc of Slemich, a druid chieftain. Miliuc gave Patrick the task of herdsman.

Patrick had grown up in a Christian home, but he had never made a decision to follow Christ until he was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Not only did he choose to follow Christ, but he started to pray.

And as he prayed, miracles began happening. Here are six of them I learned about as I did some research:

- 1. As Patrick prayed, the Holy Spirit kept him warm and full**

**of energy even in harsh conditions.** Patrick was given the task of herdsman. Here's what he writes in his autobiography. "But after I had come to Ireland, it was then that I was made to shepherd the flocks day after day, and, as I did so, I would pray all the time, right through the day. More and more the love of God and fear of Him grew strong within me, and as my faith grew, so the Spirit became more and more active ... In snow, in frost, in rain, I would hardly notice any discomfort, and I was never slack but always full of energy. It is clear to me now, that this was due to ... the Spirit within me."

**2. Patrick had dreams that showed him how to escape slavery.** In one dream he heard a voice say, "Soon you will be returning to your own country. In a second dream, he heard, "Come and see where your ship is waiting for you. At 22 years old, Patrick escaped slavery. He said, "I turned on my heel and ran away, leaving behind the man to whom I had been bound for six years. Yet I came away from him in the power of God, for it was He who was guiding my every step for the best. And so I felt not the least anxiety until I reached the ship."

**3. God gave food to Patrick when he was escaping slavery.** During part of his journey, he and his friends from the ship had to journey on land for 28 days. When they ran out of food, the captain challenged Patrick to ask God to supply their need. He did, and when the men turned around, a herd of pigs had appeared. He and his friends feasted for days.

**4. As Patrick studied to become a priest,** God asked him to return to Ireland by giving him a dream where other slaves were shouting, "Holy brother of a boy, we beg you, come back and walk once more among us." His family, friends, and church leaders were obviously opposed to him going back. They knew the druids were evil, so evil that they had weaved runaway slaves into giant wicker baskets and suspended them over fires.

**5. God kept him safe as druids tried to poison him and spear**

**him to death.** One legend (written in A.D. 700) described Patrick's contest with native religious leaders, the druids. The druids insulted Patrick, tried to poison him and engaged him in magical duels in which they competed to manipulate the weather, destroy each other's sacred books and survive raging fires. When one druid dared to blaspheme the Christian God, however, Patrick sent the druid flying into the air, and the man dropped to the ground and broke his skull.

**6. With God's help, St. Patrick drove most cultic druid practices out of Ireland.** One website reads:

*Among the converts of the day of Tara were some who held high rank and enjoyed great consideration in the nation. The king remained unconverted, but the queen and her two daughters transferred their faith from the altars of the groves to the Cross of Calvary. A few days after the queen's conversion, the Christian party in the royal court was reinforced by the accession of the king's brother, Connal, who was not ashamed to confess himself a disciple of the Saviour. There followed, lower in rank, but perhaps higher in influence, Dubbach, chief of the bards, whom we should now call poet laureate, but who possessed an authority far beyond any known to this functionary in our day. To these is to be added a name not less eminent than any of the preceding ones, that of Fiecc. Logaire remained on the side of the old religion, though, it would seem, cooled in his attachment to it.*

With God's help, Patrick replaced the druid practices with the truth of Jesus and the gospel.

### **Patrick's Faith**

After Patrick came to Ireland, his love for God continued to grow stronger and stronger.

In his autobiography, he wrote:

*But after I had come to Ireland, it was then that I was made to shepherd the flocks day after day, and, as I did so, I would pray all the time, right through the day. More and more the love of God and fear of Him grew strong within me, and as my faith grew, so the Spirit became more and more active ... In snow, in frost, in rain, I would hardly notice any discomfort, and I was never slack but always full of energy. It is clear to me now, that this was due to ... the Spirit within me.*

As Patrick's faith in Christ grew, the Spirit became more and more active in his physical body. God not only kept him protected and comfortable in cold weather and poor working conditions, but God's Spirit also gave him energy.

Sadly, instead of being known for driving cultic practices out of Ireland, he's known by many as the man who drove the snakes out of England. Over the 1,600 years since Patrick lived an incredibly selfless, faith-filled life, the real stories of God's miraculous dismantling of satanic practices in Ireland have been replaced by legends, leprechauns, good-luck charms, pots of gold and other cute fairy tales.

I believe if St. Patrick were alive today, he would use his namesake holiday to celebrate Jesus, the gospel and the miracles God did for him as he preached Jesus to the often cruel and savage people of Ireland. He would get rid of the cute fairy tales and remind us of what his life represents.

He lived most of his life on an island filled with the most barbaric evil. He also experienced and was filled with power and love from the most beautiful Savior. And when the two went head to head, there was only one winner.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

This popular prayer is often attributed to St. Patrick:

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,*

*Christ behind me, Christ before me,*

*Christ beside me, Christ to win me,*

*Christ to comfort and restore me,*

*Christ beneath me, Christ above me,*

*Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,*

*Christ in hearts of all that love me*

*Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

Listen to my *Strang Report* podcast titled *6 Miracles You Can Learn from St. Patrick* and post the link on your social media as your way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day (and to witness to those who follow your social media). {eoa}

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