

**Patrick, St** (c. 389-c. 461), called the Apostle of Ireland, Christian prelate. His birthplace is uncertain, but it was probably in south-western Britain; his British name was Succat. At 16 years of age he was carried off by Irish marauders and passed his captivity as a herdsman near the mountain Slemish in County Antrim (as tradition has it) or in County Connacht (Connaught). The young herdsman saw visions in which he was urged to escape, and after six years of slavery he did so, to the northern coast of Gaul (now France). Ordained a priest, possibly by St Germanus, at Auxerre, he returned to Ireland. Patrick was appointed, sometime after 431, successor to St Palladius, first bishop of Ireland. Patrick concentrated on the west and north of Ireland. It is possible that he visited Rome and returned with relics. His reported use of the **shamrock** as an illustration of the Trinity led to its being regarded as the Irish national symbol. A strange chant of his, called the *Lorica*, is preserved in the *Liber Hymnorum* (Book of Hymns), and what purports to have been a handbell he used during Mass is shown in the National Museum, Dublin. His traditional feast day is March 17.

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