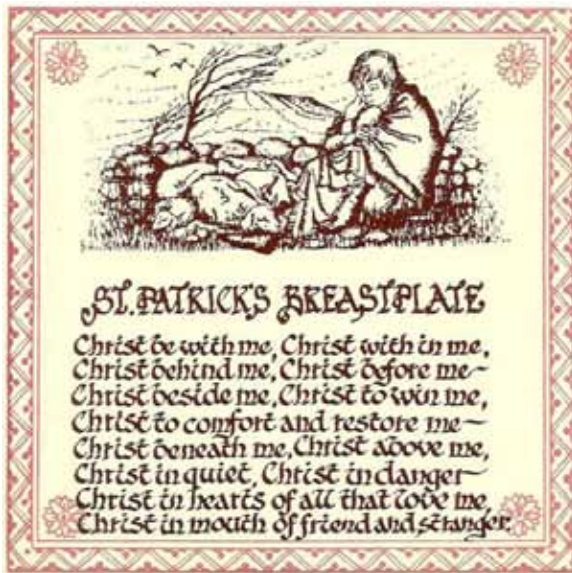
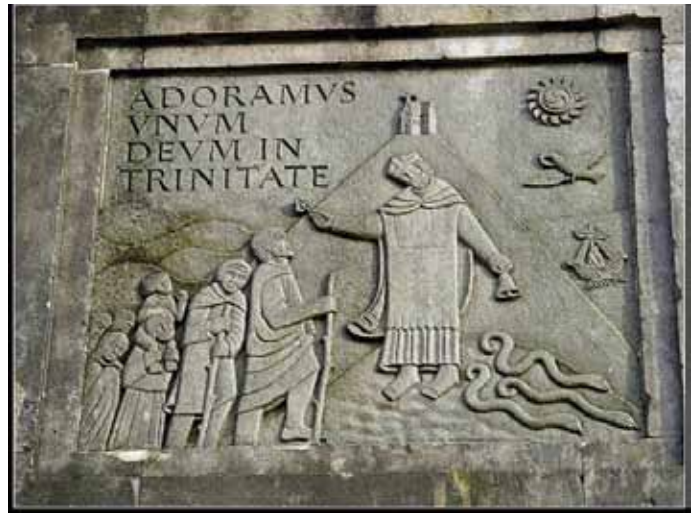


Weekly Musing † March 14, 2011

It being the green season (and I do not mean the Trinity season of the church year) I should say something about the saint from Britain, St. Patrick. Of course we look to the saints for the virtues we believe universal and long held by Christian men and women. One such virtue, of which the well meaning occasionally remind me, is being civil and staying out of politics. Here is a quote from one of the only and certainly the most genuine, of Patrick's writings, his letter to the chieftain Coroticus:

With my own hand I have written and composed these words, to be given, delivered, and sent to the soldiers of Coroticus; I do not say, to my fellow citizens, or to fellow citizens of the holy Romans, but to fellow citizens of the demons, because of their evil works. Like our enemies, they live in death, allies of the Scots and the apostate Picts. Dripping with blood, they welter in the blood of innocent Christians, whom I have begotten into the number for God and confirmed in Christ!



Well! I must admit this letter increases my estimation of the good saint. It would be more than silly to assume a Christian mission among people who can at this time be called Barbaric without fear of contradiction, should in some way be meek and mild and adorned with the polite virtues of popular imagination. Patrick is responding to the slaughter of newly baptized Christians.

Patrick was a Britain (a large term) and tells us he was born at Bannavem Taburniae whose location is still much debated. He was kidnapped by Irish pirates at 16 and received a vision from God to escape. He did escape and felt called to go back to the Irish as a missionary. This he did. One of the early documents we have claims a certain Palladius as the first bishop of the Irish and there is scant possibility the two men are the same.

This plate of the famous hymn attributed to the saint (actually it was a bit later) shows him as a young man tending sheep in Ireland when he received the vision from God to escape.

Patrick also wrote a 'Confessions', a popular term for a certain kind of writing best known to us from the Confessions of St. Augustine, a north African saint. Patrick wrote the confessions to justify his ministry among the Irish. It would be pleasant to tell you that all Christians got along well but, alas, they did no better then than we do now. Missionaries were sent by Rome to far off people not always just to Christianize. but also to bring them into liturgical and theological step with Rome. The aforementioned Palladius was probably sent to minister to existent Christian communities and to make sure than no heretical Pelagians were among them. If I told you about the theological inadequacies of the Pelagians it may be that your eyes would glaze over. Most moderns would find the point somewhat minor, but this was a theological age. A priest of orthodox belief of that period of history, going into one of our newer Christian churches, would after, say 10 minutes, curse what he heard in the name of Christ and storm out. No, I am not exaggerating. An earlier age required both theological acumen and courage. Indeed it is courage that we note in St. Patrick's letter to Coroticus. Among warring peoples, which included much of the world's people for much of history, courage on the part of the missionaries was a necessary concomitant to the Gospel. Native peoples respected courage and had no use for the cowardly. Indeed the cowardly would not have gone forth into the dark northern woods.



This morning I showed the preschool children the shamrocks (clovers) that adorn the top of the old altar in the chapel. Legend has it that St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach the Irish about the Trinity (it has three leaves but is one plant). As I ruminate about this worthy man I think how many places in the world and how many churches are named after him. When St. Patrick was alive, the place where our neighbor, St. Patrick's Co-cathedral, now sits was sagebrush populated by nomadic peoples, elk and grizzly bears, the latter two not having yet been driven to high ground. The work of the gospel spreads in a mysterious way even while we sleep.

News from St. Luke's

Don't forget that we have the Stations of the Cross every Friday during lent at noon. This had a small but faithful attendance in year's past but no one showed up the first time.

Our first Lent soup and study will be on Tuesday March 22 at 6:00 P.M. We will be studying the lectionary propers for the coming Sunday. A sign up sheet is posted on the doors to Cardwell Hall.

Betty Fridrichson was good enough to speak at all three services this last weekend on Episcopal Relief and Development. She reminded us that we have many fellow Episcopalians in Japan who need our aid. They are not a poor country but no one is prepared for this sort of tragedy.

I hope those of you who are using "The Desert, an Anthology for Lent" find it useful. I do. Lent is traditionally a time for study, prayer and fasting. We have gradually replaced the latter with alms giving. Things change.



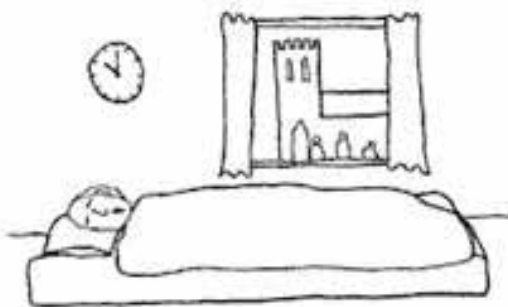
LENT



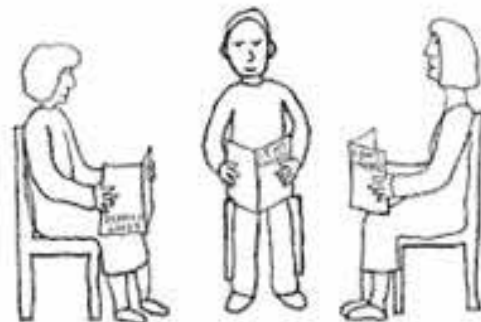
LENT IS A TIME FOR QUIET
REFLECTION AND CONTEMPLATION



IT IS A SEASON OF ABSTINENCE
AND FASTING



SOME CHRISTIANS GIVE
SOMETHING UP DURING LENT



OTHERS CHOOSE TO CARRY
OUT ACTS OF PENANCE