

Secondary Assembly: 'Patrick, come back!'

This assembly, timed to coincide with St. Patrick's Day on March 17th, takes the form of a Time Travel Interview with Ireland's Patron Saint. It disentangles fact from legend and shows that Patrick's story is relevant today, giving opportunity for discussion at key stages 3, 4 and 5

Resources

A Leader and two Readers. One plays the part of a young TV interviewer, while the other appears as St. Patrick – a person of wide experience, solemn yet good humoured.

Engagement

Leader: Here's the name of a well-known person from the past. Let's see how many questions it takes to work out who he is.

- *He has the letters 'St.' in front of his name. He is a 'Saint'.*
- *He was born in Britain – perhaps not far from Hadrian's Wall.*
- *He was kidnapped at the age of 16.*
- *Today/ this week (March 17th) is his special day – in New York there will be a big parade in his honour.*
- *A well known footballer – Mr. Viera of Manchester City – shares his name.*
- *He is the Patron Saint of Ireland.*

The answer is 'St Patrick' - and today/this week/March 17th is St. Patrick's Day. Like many famous people from the past, we see him through a cloud of legends; however he also wrote a short account of his adventures*, so we can zoom back through centuries to bring to meet the 'real' Patrick! Our first Reader will play the part of the Interviewer. Meet Trish/Tim Trendy of Time Travel Television...

Reader 1: Hello, Viewers!

Leader: Reader Two will play the part of Patrick...

Reader 2: Greetings in the name of God.

Leader: Now let's go... back to the past!

Reflection

Reader 1: Well, Patrick... or should I call you 'Saint' Patrick?

Reader 2: My real name was 'Patricius'. That's Latin. But Patrick will do just fine.

Reader 1: March 17th is your day, Patrick. It's a great day for the Irish. And not just in Ireland. In New York they have a huge parade, with marching bands.

Reader 2: Amazing.... Back in my own time, things were very different.

Reader 1: Would you say you were Irish, or British or what?

Reader 2: I was British and Roman. My father was a local councilor who served the church, and he had his own farm. We thought that we were still part of the Roman world, with beautiful books and the Latin language. But the Empire was breaking up and, when I was just sixteen, raiders came and kidnapped me. They took me across the sea to Ireland and sold me as a slave. My job was to look after sheep.

Reader 1: Did you hate the Irish?

Reader 2: No. But I was very lonely. When I tried to talk about the true God, most of them just laughed. Then one day I had a vision... it said 'There's a ship waiting for you'. So I took a big risk, ran away from my master and travelled a long way across Ireland, back to the east coast. And there, by God's help, I did find that ship waiting. I had many adventures, but in the end I got back to my friends and family in Britain. But I didn't stay for very long.

Reader 1: What on earth made you think of going back?

Reader 2: I had an another vision. I saw a man called Victoricus who seemed to be coming from Ireland, bringing letters with him. He had one for me. It was headed : 'The Voice of the Irish' As I started to read, I seemed to hear the voices of people I knew, who lived far away beside the western ocean. They were calling me to me:

'Patrick, come back to us. Please come back!'

Reader 1: It can't have been easy decision.

Reader 2: Not easy at all. I wanted go back to Ireland as a Christian missionary, but some people said that I

wasn't fit to be a leader in the church. Others hinted that I was out to make money.

Reader 1: And were you?

Reader 2: Not at all. When new Christians came to church and laid their jewellery on the altar as a gift, I would make them take it back, even if it hurt their feelings.

Reader 1: And in the end you got what you wanted.

Reader 2: Not what I wanted. What God wanted.

Reader 1: They say that God gave you special powers. You even drove all the snakes out of Ireland.

Reader 2: *(Smiling)* That's just a legend.

Reader 1: Let's forget the snakes. What were the real problems?

Reader 2: Raiding. Looting. Stealing people and selling them. Some of my young Christians were carried back across the sea to Britain and sold as slaves. Just like me when I was sixteen. And life was extra tough for women slaves. But I did my best to help them.

Reader 1: It can't have been easy to spread the Christian message.

Reader 2: Many were still worshipping false gods. But others were willing to listen. Some Irish kings accepted the Good News and even asked me to teach their sons. But they could be suspicious too. Once they kept me chained up for two weeks and threatened to kill me.

Reader 1: In spite of it all, you planted Christianity and became the Patron Saint of Ireland.

Reader 2: Give thanks to God, not to me.

Reader 1: I'm afraid we are running out of time. St. Patrick, would you like to say a final word to our viewers in the twenty first century?

Reader 2: Put your trust in God, forgive those who hurt you, do your best to help people in trouble, and never give up hope.

Reader 1: Thank you, St Patrick, and now back to the studio.

Response

Leader: St. Patrick lived long ago, but his story is right up to date. He grew up in a dangerous world, and he was the victim of what we call 'people trafficking'. He found himself in a strange and frightening country. But he did his best to forgive his enemies, and took big risks to return and serve them. The call was 'Patrick, come back and help us!' Let's think what a call like that might mean for us.

Reader 1: We might be asked to offer friendship to someone who had hurt us.

Reader 2: We might be asked to take a difficult job in a tough part of the country.

Reader 1: We might be asked to work with people who have particular needs. In Patrick's time they were slaves. Who might they be now?

Leader: St. Patrick was a Christian. To him that call 'Patrick come back', was a message from God. Listen now to a poem. It's based on Irish words people used to think he wrote. Make it your prayer if you wish.

Leader/Readers:

'Three in One – One in Three
Living God in Trinity,
Now I bind you close to me.
Come as I call you.

Come and bless this my day,
Strength of God to lead my way,
Power of God to be my stay:
Come as I call you.

Christ behind, Christ before;
Lamp in peace and shield in war,
Christ to comfort and restore:
Come as I call you.

Christ my source, Christ my end,
Christ my Lord, my life my friend,
Christ protect me and defend,
Come as I call you.

One in three – three in one –
God the Father, Spirit Son,
Be with me when day is done.
Stay for I need you.

*This assembly is based on the *Confession of St Patrick* (English text in, e.g, *The Living Legend of St Patrick* by Alannah Hopkin (Grafton Books, 1989; ISBN 0-246-13099-7)