



St. Patrick's Breastplate and Reflection

What is St. Patrick's Breastplate?

St. Patrick's Breastplate is a popular prayer attributed to one of Ireland's most beloved patron saints. According to tradition, St. Patrick wrote it in 433 A.D. for divine protection before successfully converting the Irish King Leoghaire and his subjects from paganism to Christianity. (The term breastplate refers to a piece of armor worn in battle.)

More recent scholarship suggests its author was anonymous. In any case, this prayer certainly reflects the spirit with which St. Patrick brought our faith to Ireland! St. Patrick's Breastplate, also known as *The Lorica* (the cry of the deer), was popular enough to inspire a hymn based on this text as well.

**I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the
Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.**

**I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His
baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His
burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His
ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the
judgment of doom.**

**I arise today
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preaching of apostles,
In the faith of confessors,
In the innocence of holy virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.**

**I arise today, through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,**

**The radiance of the moon,
The splendor of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rock.**

**I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.**

**I summon today
All these powers between me and those evils,
Against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body
and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an abundance of
reward.**

**Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.**

[Note that people sometimes pray a shorter version of this prayer just with these 15 lines about Christ above. The conclusion follows below.]

**I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the
Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.**

A Classroom Reflection

What follows is a reflection based on the second half of St Patrick's Breastplate. We may not wear combat gear in our daily lives but this prayer/reflection on St. Patrick's Breastplate may function as divine armour to protect against the difficulties we may face in life.

Invite the students to silently become aware of what is going on around them. Tell them to close their eyes and sit in a comfortable upright position in their chair. Ask them to become aware of their breathing. Once the students are in a prayerful state instruct them to keep their eyes closed and listen openly to the reflection.

Christ with me – Invite Christ quietly into your heart.

Christ before me – Think about events or things coming up over the next few days/weeks that you may be worried about. Ask Christ to help you face these challenges that lie ahead.

Christ behind me – Consider moments in your past that you may have found difficult. Spend a few minutes thinking about how Christ was present in these moments.

Christ in me – Do you spend quiet time in the day deepening your relationship with Christ? Make a commitment to set aside some time each day to talk and listen to God who is always with you.

Christ beneath me – All of us need help at points in our lives. It is at the lowest points that Christ is there carrying us through. Ask God now if there is anything you need help with.

Christ above me- Just as an umbrella protects us from the rain, Christ protects all of us. Think about somebody close to you that needs God's protective care at this moment. Ask God to help them.

Christ on my right hand – Christ uses your hands to help and comfort others in today's world. How can you use your hands to further God's kingdom here on earth?

Christ on my left hand – God is always by your side even though you might not realise it. Thank God for never giving up on you even during those moments when you have turned away from him.

Christ when I lie down – Even when we sleep God is there watching over us and protecting us. Thank God quietly for his loving protective presence in your life.

Christ when I arise – When you wake up in the morning do you notice the beauty of the world around you? Thank God for his beautiful gift of creation.

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me - "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."(John 15:12) Recall a kind act that somebody has done for you today or this week. How have they been the light of Christ in the world for you? Thank God for their kindness.

Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me – If someone who knows you really well were to give an honest answer to the question – What is the best thing about your friend? What do you think their answer would be? Would others say the same about you?

Christ in every eye that sees me – Imagine that somebody took a photograph of you this morning interacting with your family/friends without you realising it. Do you think you would be happy with what the image captured? Did you speak kind or harsh words to a loved one? Did you help your family member/friend or were you angry with them?

Christ in every ear that hears me – Think back over the conversations you have had with others this week. Have you been kind and thoughtful in what you have said or have your words been hurtful or damaging to others?

Dear God,

St. Patrick came to Ireland to help people discover your loving presence. May I take comfort from the fact that whatever challenges I may face in life you will always be there at my side to help and guide me through. Help me to be your witness in the world, showing others your loving presence through my words and actions.

Amen

Sources:

<http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/st-patricks-breastplate.html>