



Assembly

## St Patrick's Day

### Aim:

- To inform pupils about the life of St Patrick
- To encourage pupils to think about how they want to be remembered

### Introduction

Choose one of the following to introduce your assembly.

### St Patrick's Day quiz

(\* indicates the correct answer)

1. Some areas in Ireland are said to receive this much rainfall each year, which accounts for the nickname 'The Emerald isle'.
  - a) 40 inches
  - b) 60 inches
  - c) 80 inches (\*)
2. 'Erin Go Bragh' is a phrase often heard on St Patrick's Day. It means:
  - a) Ireland for Ever (\*)
  - b) I love Ireland
  - c) Brave and free
3. Which of these bands did not come from Ireland?
  - a) Westlife
  - b) The Script
  - c) Oasis (\*)
4. How many Americans trace their ancestry back to Ireland?
  - a) 30 million
  - b) 40 million (\*)
  - c) 60 million
5. The Blarney Stone is said to give what to the person who kisses it:
  - a) The gift of the gab (\*)
  - b) untold wealth and happiness
  - c) chapped lips

### Green for go!

Invite two teams of three pupils to come out to the front and give them paper and pens. Then tell them that they have one minute to write down as many phrases or words as they can that have the word 'Green' in them. At the end of the minute, see how many words or phrases each team has. Cross out any that both teams have thought of, and count up how many words are unique to each team. The team that has the most could be awarded a green prize - perhaps a green apple each, or some green sweets to share.

Ireland is known as The Emerald Isle and Green is the colour of St Patrick's Day. Many Irish people will wear Green on this day and there is a custom that school children will pinch people who aren't wearing green!  
Some suggestions for words or phrases:

Greenhouse, green fingers, Greenland, greenhouse effect, Greenwich, green bean, green belt, green card, green bottle, Green Cross Code, green finch, greengrocer, greenhouse gas, Greenpeace, greenstick, greengage, Greenwich Mean Time.

### Looking Deeper

Choose one or both of the Looking Deeper sections.

#### The life of St Patrick

There are lots of myths about St Patrick, perhaps because Irish people enjoy storytelling so much! He is the patron saint of Ireland and one of the most widely known figures in Christianity. One of the myths about him is that he drove all the snakes from Ireland. There are no snakes in Ireland now, but there may never have been!



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St Patrick was born in Britain at the end of the fourth century. When Patrick was 16 he was taken prisoner by a group of Irish raiders who attacked the estate where he lived. They took him to Ireland where he spent six years in captivity. During this time he worked as a shepherd and was almost always on his own. He turned to God for comfort and became a devout and sincere Christian.



After he had been captive for just over six years, Patrick escaped and walked 200 miles to the Irish Coast. He believed that he had heard God's voice telling him it was time to leave Ireland. He escaped to Britain where he felt God was speaking to him again. This time he had a dream where an angel told him to return to Ireland as a missionary. He decided to become a priest first and studied for 15 years. After he was ordained as a priest he was sent to Ireland to teach people about the Christian faith. Patrick used the native beliefs of the Irish people to teach about Christianity. For example, he used bonfires to celebrate Easter as Irish people were used to honouring their gods with fire. He also superimposed a sun, a powerful Irish symbol, onto the Christian cross to create what is now known as a Celtic cross.



Patrick is said to have died on the 17th March around 460 AD which is why St Patrick's Day is celebrated on that date.

The story of St Patrick shows his determination to follow what he believed to be the call of God on his life. He walked 200 miles, studied for 15 years and returned to the land of his captivity in order to be obedient to God.

## St Patrick's Breastplate

One of the best known prayers associated with St Patrick is known as St Patrick's Breastplate. It talks about choosing to 'put on' the power of the presence of God. The prayer ends with these words (invite pupils to visualise what is described here):

Christ beside me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me.

Christ on my right hand,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ where I lie,  
Christ where I sit,  
Christ where I rise.





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Christ in the hearts of all who think of me,  
Christ in the mouths of all who speak to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

This prayer picks up on the teaching of Jesus when he left his disciples to return to heaven. He said, 'I will be with you always even until the end of the world.' (Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20, CEV).

This prayer reminds Christians that Jesus lives in them by his Spirit, goes before them, and that they should treat other people that they meet as though they were meeting Jesus himself.

### Reflection

St Patrick is remembered every year on 17th March, not just in Ireland but in lots of places around the world where there are large Irish communities. He is remembered for his faith in Christ, the way he taught the Christian Faith and for his obedience to God. Allow pupils a few moments of quiet for them to think about how they want to be remembered.

### The Trinity

Show pupils the following verse:

Good St. Patrick travelled far, to teach God's Holy Word  
And when he came to Erin's soil, a wondrous thing occurred  
He plucked a shamrock from the earth and held it in His hand  
To symbolise the Trinity that all might understand  
The first leaf for the Father  
And the second for the Son  
The third leaf for the Holy Spirit

All three of them in one.

St Patrick was known for teaching about the Christian faith in a way that people could understand. He used objects and symbols that were familiar to the Irish people and here used a simple three-leafed shamrock to explain what Christian faith teaches about God being 'three in one' or 'trinity'.

### Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for St Patrick who was willing to follow what he believed you were calling him to. Help us to have the same determination and perseverance.  
Amen.



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Word

And when he  
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He plucked a shamrock  
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The first leaf for the Father  
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Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me.

Christ on my right hand,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ where I lie,  
Christ where I sit,  
Christ where I rise.

Christ in the hearts of all who  
think of me,  
Christ in the mouths of all who  
speak to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees  
me,  
Christ in every ear that hears  
me.

