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### Saint Patrick Day by Carl E. Beyer

St. Patrick Day is this coming Tuesday so get your green out. Luckily for me I am always ready because my eyes are green except when my temper flares but that is another story. I always imagine two Irish blokes sitting in a bar saying, "My priest is better than your priest and let me tell you how ...". It is true that Ireland doesn't have any snakes but this is usually attributed to the fact that it is an island and isolated from snake populations. But maybe one fine sunny afternoon somehow a snake wandered off a ship and onto the island and St. Patrick took it upon himself to rid Ireland of the snake and from there the St. Patrick legend started.

It is probably true that we do owe the Lucky Three Leaf Clover to St Patrick. Legend says St. Patrick explained that the shamrock could define the Trinity. That in the one God there are three divine persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The shamrock was sacred to the Druids, so Saint Patrick used it to explain the trinity.

The true story, with no embellishment is still an amazing story. St. Patrick was born in Britain to wealthy parents. At the age of sixteen, Irish raiders kidnapped St. Patrick while attacking his parents' home. He was held in captivity for six years in Ireland where he served as a shepherd by himself. After six years St. Patrick had a dream in which he believed God spoke to him to escape. He walked over 200 miles to the Irish coast and from there escaped to Britain. It was shortly afterwards that he had his second revelation to return to Ireland as a missionary to convert the Irish people to Christianity. After fifteen years of training St. Patrick was ordained as a priest and sent to Ireland. Personally, I wonder what kind of training took fifteen years but on the other hand if fifteen years of training can set you on course to being a saint then it was well worth it.

During St. Patrick young years, Ireland was mostly a nature-based pagan country. The real legend of St. Patrick should have been his ability to incorporate some of the pagan customs and symbols into the Christian religion to facilitate conversion. St. Patrick was able to achieve this without corrupting the Christian's beliefs. For example, the traditional bonfires the Irish used to celebrate their gods was transformed into an Easter bonfire tradition. Rather than a fighter of snakes it would seem that St. Patrick was an evangelist for the Christian religion. He was a person who, rather than having an iron fist, had a healing hand for guiding people to Christ. A man who instead of seeking revenge for his year of captivity sought instead to give these same people the greatest gift a person could receive, Christ.

I have often wondered what it would be like to have a magic Time Machine. Unlike some, I have no desire for immortality, but with a Time Machine I would have the ability to speak with the Saints and with this I would desire many more years. The first basic understanding of the Saints is to always remember that they were human the same as us. They had their fears, failures, bravery and successes as we do. What a wonder it would be, to be able to be there through the years as St. Patrick went from a privileged life, to slavery, to sainthood. What gifts does God give these individuals that lead them to sainthood? I would love to speak to these saints who I imagine would be reluctant to speak about themselves. A basic belief I have in these Saints is they must have serve their lives humbly. I cannot imagine going back in time, entering an Irish bar and finding St. Patrick sitting there boasting about how he rid Ireland of its snakes. No, this humble man who is said to have slept on bare flagstone and sang Psalms to end his day would have had to be pressured to describe his own life. His concern would not be for how history would see him but rather how Christ sees his soul. But the opportunity to spend time with this man and the other saints would be

a treasure.

Of course the ultimate target of my Time Machine would be the period when our Lord walked the earth in his humanity. Oh to be there and see our Lord grow from a baby to dying for our sins would be something. Yes, I could spend years bouncing around in my Time Machine checking out Christ and his Saints.

Lacking a Time Machine though we read about our Saints and imagine. We can imagine what they thought, what they suffered, what they enjoyed, what they loved and what they hated. We can imagine their struggles with their beliefs and their ultimate giving of themselves completely to our Lord and his works. We can imagine and through imagining grow closer to our Lord. We learn from the Saints what God may want us to do in our lives.

Go forth and try to imitate our Saints. Go forth and draw closer to our Lord. God Bless you all.