



CATHOLIC HEROES  
OF THE FAITH

Leader's Guide for the DVD

# THE STORY OF SAINT PATRICK



From Christian History Institute

L E A D E R



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## **Introduction**

### **to the *Catholic Heroes of the Faith* Series**

Kids today have no shortage of heroes. From Hollywood celebrities to music artists and sports figures, it would seem that there are plenty of heroes to go around. The heroes being offered by popular culture are teaching children that physical perfection, financial success, and fame are the most important goals in life. The morals and values presented by these heroes are often in direct opposition to the standards parents want to pass on to their children. So, while there is no shortage of heroes, there is a dreadful shortage of heroes worth emulating.

The Catholic Heroes of the Faith DVD series has been created to offer children real heroes that are worth emulating. The heroes we choose to portray have lived truly great lives—lives marked by moral depth, strength of character, and an unswerving commitment to faith in Christ. By sharing in their struggles and small steps of obedience, we are all challenged to live lives of faith. It is our sincere desire that as children get to know these heroes, they will be challenged to follow in the footsteps of the greatest hero of them all, Jesus Christ. Learn more about the mission behind this series at:

**[www.CatholicHeroesOfTheFaith.com](http://www.CatholicHeroesOfTheFaith.com)**



## Synopsis of *Catholic Heroes of the Faith: The Story of Saint Patrick*

Far from home and at the mercy of the Irish pirates who kidnapped him, young Patrick is forced to spend his days tending sheep and surviving wild animal attacks. That is, until he calls out to the God of his youth. Long days spent aching for home become long days of prayer and soon



Patrick returns to his captors with the Gospel.

Patrick is blessed with an awareness of

God's presence that he had not known before. After six years as a slave, Patrick hears a Voice urging him to make a daring escape. Once back home, he discerns a calling to become a priest and is eventually appointed bishop, but all this pales when he receives yet another calling of God—to take the Gospel to his former kidnappers. Find out why the man known as Saint Patrick is credited with introducing Ireland to Christ in this exciting episode of *Catholic Heroes of the Faith*!



## Teaching Plan for *The Story of Saint Patrick*

Join us in a time and place in history you may find unfamiliar—5th-century Britannia. Under the rule of the fading Roman Empire, this part of the Latinized world, now known as Great Britain, felt the impact of being a fringe territory with increasing barbarian attacks and economic changes. It is in this context that the story of Saint Patrick begins.

Many of the details of Saint Patrick's life are lost to history, but his father was a local Roman senator and church deacon. A deacon is a man that receives the Laying on of Hands in the Sacrament of Holy Orders to be able to assist the Bishop and Priest in serving the People of God (CCC 1554). As a result, he enjoyed a privileged and comfortable life but was uninterested in making his parents' faith his own. When Irish pirates kidnapped him as a teenager and sold him into slavery, Patrick the shepherd finally turned to the Good Shepherd for hope and salvation. In this episode of *Catholic Heroes of the Faith*, young viewers will learn how God loves, calls, and rescues us in the same way that a shepherd cares for his sheep.

**1. PREVIEW *Catholic Heroes of the Faith: The Story of Saint Patrick* to become familiar with the story.** Our theme for this series is *The Good Shepherd*. Four sub-themes will be explored:

- **Lesson 1: My Shepherd** — God walks with us in frightening times.
- **Lesson 2: Lost Sheep** — God seeks out and saves the lost.
- **Lesson 3: Feed My Sheep** — God loves and cares for his sheep.
- **Lesson 4: The Good Shepherd** — Jesus lays down his life for the sheep.

**2. REVIEW the Supplementary Information.** Become more informed on this true story by reading through our supplementary materials beginning on p. 17.

**3. SELECT and PREPARE Teaching Material.** Our four-lesson plan is designed to lead children on a faith journey with Saint Patrick. Feel free to mix and match to best suit your group and the time available. All material is reproducible and designed to help children apply the teaching themes.

**NOTE:** Special supplies are needed for activities in each session. To supplement our focus on The Good Shepherd, we encourage you to invite a guest with spiritual shepherding experience for session three's **GOD'S UNDER-SHEPHERDS INTERVIEW**. (You can find question prompts for your group on p. 9 of the Student Pages.)





## Session 1: My Shepherd

**FOCUS: God walks with us in frightening times.**

**THEME VERSE:** “The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack...Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.” Psalm 23:1; 4

- **PREPARE:** Bring pictures, travel brochures, and a map of Ireland to share with your class. Use the information on p. 18 of the Leader's Guide to teach about Saint Patrick's historical context.

For **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME**, you will need a shepherd's staff (a walking stick with a crook or even a long dowel rod) and the printed theme verse.

For **MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE INVITATION**, bring paper, scissors, markers/colored pencils, and enough small bottles for your group.

For the game **FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD**, bring a blindfold, painter's tape, and any soft objects that could serve as obstacles.

- **GAME—FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD:**

Choose one volunteer to be the “sheep” and tie a blindfold around the volunteer's eyes. Create a “start” and “finish” line with painter's tape and place some obstacles in between the lines. Line up the rest of your group along the sides of the space and direct your volunteer to the starting line.

The object of the game is for the sheep to get to the finish line without touching any obstacles and by listening to the voice of the shepherd. With you starting as the shepherd, shout out instructions to your blindfolded volunteer. To make the game harder, instruct the other students to loudly bleat like sheep. Give others in the class a chance to be the sheep by rearranging obstacles before their turns.

- **TEACH—ROMAN BRITAIN AND PRE-CHRISTIAN IRELAND:**

*ASK: Can you think of any Bible stories that have sheep or shepherds in them? (Pause for answers) Have you ever really thought about sheep? What do you think they are like? What would it be like to be a shepherd? But what do you really know about sheep? (Let your class tell you all they know about sheep and shepherding.)*

*SAY: In the game we just played, we spent time learning how important it is for sheep to listen to their shepherd's voice—because the shepherd is the one who cares for the sheep and keeps them safe. This will help us understand our verses for today, and you'll find out more about that soon. But did you know that “shepherd” is an important job all over the world, from ancient times to even today? I bet you've all seen sheep on farms or in petting zoos. In other places of the world, like the United Kingdom (Ireland, Scotland, and Britain), sheep are far more common. And you'll find out*



*that sheep are a pretty important part of the life of the faith hero we'll meet very soon. Let's go to the world of our faith hero now: 5th-century Ireland!*

Review the information on p.18 of the Leader's Guide.

SAY: *As we'll see next week, our faith hero learns just how important a good shepherd is for sheep. Did you know that the Bible often shows us how God is like a shepherd? Let's go to His Word to find out.*

- **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME:** Invite your students into your religious education center for catechesis. Block the way to your center with your shepherd's staff and then allow your "sheep" to enter one by one after you call their names. Hold up the staff and explain to them how shepherds use them to correct and guide sheep. (See p. 3 of the Student Pages for more information.)

ASK: *How might God be like a shepherd?*

After a few answers, ask for a volunteer to read today's theme verse, Psalm 23:1-4.

SAY: *Do you know who wrote these verses? (David.) When do we normally hear the Psalms of David read or sung? (Mass.) David, who was God's anointed king over Israel, wrote this Psalm and many others. God inspired David to write Scripture for us today, and these words point us to God's truth. But David didn't start his life as a king or even a prince. Does anyone know what David's job was when he was growing up? (A shepherd.) That's right! David's job was to take care of his father's sheep. David knew what it meant to be a shepherd, and his Psalm shows us how God is our shepherd. Let's read the whole Psalm together now.*

READ: Psalm 23.

DISCUSS: *Why might a shepherd lead his sheep beside quiet waters? Why are green pastures important? What does it mean to "lack nothing"? What do you think it means to walk in the darkest valley? If you remember what we said about how a shepherd uses his staff, how can God's "rod and staff" be a comfort to us in dark times? Can anyone tell me how Psalm 23 might connect to three sacraments? Think of cleansing waters, anointing with oil, and the cup? Is this psalm talking about God providing for our physical needs, spiritual needs, or both?*

SAY: *In this psalm, we see how we are the sheep and God is the good shepherd. He cares for us in all the ways we need—physically and spiritually. What are some ways God has cared for you?*

- **PREVIEW THE STORY OF SAINT PATRICK:**

SAY: *When we gather together next time, we will watch a 30-minute video about Saint Patrick, known as the first missionary to Ireland. Let's watch a short clip together now!*

Play the short preview clip at the beginning of the DVD.



SAY: *What do you think happens to Saint Patrick? We'll find out next week, but for now, let's make this invitation and get ready for a wild ride!*

- **PROJECT—MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE INVITATION:** Print the invitations on page 9 and encourage your group to decorate and personalize at least one invitation to hand out to a friend. Direct each student to roll up his or her finished invitation and place it inside a bottle.
- **CLOSING PRAYER:** *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Heavenly Father, thank you for being our shepherd. Thank you for comforting for us, for guiding us, and for being beside us in all things, even in the scariest times. Teach us to trust your goodness and loving care.*

Leader: *Saint Patrick.*

All: *Pray for us.*

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

- **SAINT PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE PRAYER**

Christ be with me, Christ within me  
Christ behind me, Christ before me  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me  
Christ to comfort me and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger  
Christ in hearts of all that love me  
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

- **PREPARATION FOR NEXT LESSON:** Review session 2 beforehand and gather your supplies accordingly.
- **LOOKING AHEAD:** Start thinking now about your guest speaker for **GOD'S UNDER-SHEPHERDS INTERVIEW**. As we make the connection to God as the Good Shepherd and his care for the sheep, our interview questions are best suited for the shepherds under the Shepherd—Bishops and Priests who are the shepherds on earth for the Heavenly Shepherd. Consider inviting a member of your church's clergy to your group.

**NOTE:** Refer to the answer key on p. 21 for answers to selected Student Pages.





**You're invited!**

Join us as we watch

**The Story of Saint Patrick.**

The perilous journey  
to Ireland begins on

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.



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## Session 2: Lost Sheep

**FOCUS:** View *The Story of Saint Patrick* and consider how God seeks and saves the lost.

**THEME VERSE:** “The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack...He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name.” Psalm 23:1,3

- **PREPARE:** Be sure to have all the equipment necessary to show *Catholic Heroes of the Faith: The Story of Saint Patrick*.

For **RAIDER TAG**, bring some cones.

For **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME**, print out your theme verse, wrap it around your staff, and hide the staff somewhere in the room.

- **GAME: RAIDER TAG:** Welcome your guests and take your group to an open area/gym to play **RAIDER TAG**, a variation of sharks and minnows. Choose a volunteer or several to be “raiders” and direct the rest of your group to stand on one side of the gym. When you shout, “Raider ATTACK!” the group must attempt to reach the other side of the gym without being tagged. Tagged students join the raiders. Last student standing wins!
- **REVIEW:** Refresh your group with facts learned about 5th century Ireland last lesson with p.18 of the Leader's Guide.
- **INTRODUCE THE VIDEO:** SAY: *Today we will watch The Story of Saint Patrick and find out how Saint Patrick became a missionary to Ireland. As you watch try to answer this question: How does Patrick hear God?*
- **SHOW** the 30-minute program *Catholic Heroes of the Faith: The Story of Saint Patrick*.
- **STUDENT QUESTIONS:** Allow students time to process the video and ask questions about flow and content.
- **FURTHER DISCUSSION:** Lead discussion using appropriate questions from the “Dig into the Story” on p. 4 in the Student Pages. Direct advanced students to p. 5 to “Dig Deeper.”
- **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME:** Tell your group that you've hidden the shepherd's staff in the room and they'll need to find it! Ask the student who finds the staff to read the attached verse of Psalm 23:1 and 3.

SAY: *Our theme verses today continue to guide us through Psalm 23. We see again how the psalmist compares himself to sheep and God to the shepherd. The shepherd guides him along right paths. Why is that important? What happens if the sheep leaves the path? Isaiah 53:6 talks about this when it says, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray.” What do you think the verse means? (Going astray means we are sinners who have turned away from God.) When we sin, we have strayed into dangerous places, much like sheep who have wandered away from their shepherd.*



*ASK: Why is it dangerous for sheep to be away from their shepherd? What might happen to a lost sheep? Why is it such a problem when we wander away from God and sin against him?*

*SAY: The Bible says that before we trust Jesus as our Savior, we are all lost sheep, and that is a BIG problem. But the Shepherd doesn't leave us like that! In Matthew 18:12-14, Jesus told a simple story with a big message. Let's read the story together now.*

*READ: Matthew 18:12-14.*

*DISCUSS: What do the sheep represent in this parable? Who does the man who looks for the lost sheep represent? Why do you think the man would be so happy to find his lost sheep? What does this tell us about God?*

*SAY: Not only does God guide us on the right paths, but he also goes to find us if we wander away! Just like it says in verse 14, God does not want any of his little ones to perish.*

*ASK: What does "perish" mean? What do you think Jesus is really saying in this parable? In what sacrament does Jesus keep us, his little ones, from perishing to sin? (Confession)*

- **LEGENDS OF SAINT PATRICK:** Direct your group to pp. 6-7 of the Student Pages.
- **PARENT LETTER:** Distribute this letter to help parents understand the lessons you are sharing in class (p. 16 in Leader's Guide).
- **CLOSING PRAYER:** *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Father in Heaven, thank you for seeking and saving the lost through your great plan of salvation, accomplished on the cross when Jesus died for our sins in our place. We are so thankful that as our shepherd, you bring us back to you when we wander away, especially in Confession. Help us to stay close by your side.*

*Leader: Saint Patrick.*

*All: Pray for us.*

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

- **PLANNING AHEAD:** Be prepared to host your guest for **GOD'S UNDER-SHEPHERDS INTERVIEW**. Review the next lesson and pp. 10-11 of the Student Pages (**BUILD A CURRACH**). Gather needed materials.

**NOTE:** Refer to the answer key on p. 21 for answers to selected Student Pages.



## Session 3: Feed My Sheep

**FOCUS:** God loves and cares for his sheep.

**THEME VERSE:** “The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack...In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul.” Psalm 23:1-2

- **PREPARE:** Invite your guest to come speak for the **GOD’S UNDER-SHEPHERDS INTERVIEW**.

For **GATHERING SHEEP BALLOON RELAY**, you will need white balloons, permanent marker, old newspaper, masking tape, and cones.

Prepare the verse, attach to the staff, and hide it for **SHEPHERD’S STAFF BIBLE TIME**.

The **BUILD A CURRACH** and **CURRACH RACES** activities will require materials noted on p.10 of the Student Pages as well as access to water (outdoors) or a large water basin and straws.

- **REVIEW:** Use p. 8 in the Student Pages (*Story Mix Up*) to review the story of Saint Patrick. Encourage the class to share the important details of the story, focusing on what they know about their lives and legacy. Encourage your guest to ask questions of the students as they review the story.
- **GOD’S UNDER-SHEPHERDS INTERVIEW:** Invite your guest to discuss the role of priests, or also bishops and the pope, with your class. Allow plenty of time for questions and encourage your students to use the interview on p. 9 for more discussion questions.
- **SHEPHERD’S STAFF BIBLE TIME:** Invite the class into your religious education center for catechesis. Review what was discussed the last two sessions. If time permits, hide the staff with theme verse attached.

READ: Psalm 23:1-2

*DISCUSS: These verses might seem strange to us if we don’t think about them from the perspective of the sheep! What are some reasons a green pasture is good for sheep? Why would a sheep like to lie down in them and be led beside quiet waters? How do these actions show that the shepherd is caring for and loving his sheep?*

*SAY: Just like our special guest shared, one of the ways God takes care of his sheep is to give us spiritual leaders. Let’s read about it in our passage for study now.*

READ: John 21:15-17

*DISCUSS: Why does Jesus ask Saint Peter if he loves him three separate times? What does Jesus mean when he says, “Feed my sheep?” Why do you think he wants Saint Peter to take care of his sheep?*



*SAY: This passage can be hard to understand, but it shows us a lot about Jesus's loving care of his people. After Jesus rose from the dead, he came back to his disciples and prepared them for the hard work they had ahead of them—not only to share the wonderful Good News about what Jesus had done, but to lead the people who trusted in Jesus. As we just discussed, you'll remember that Saint Peter denied that he knew Jesus three times before Jesus was crucified. When Jesus asks if Saint Peter loves him, he isn't doing it to be mean or just to remind Saint Peter how he sinned; Jesus is reaffirming Saint Peter's call to the ministry and is reinstating him as a spiritual leader for the Church as the first Pope. And when Jesus returns to heaven (as you'd see if we read on in the book of Acts!) Saint Peter and other spiritual leaders become responsible for "taking care of God's sheep." The apostles later chose other earthly shepherds, bishops and priests, to help the sheep of the Heavenly Shepherd.*

*DISCUSS: Remember the things you learned from our guest speaker. What does it look like to take care of the sheep? What are some examples of how priests and bishops care for the needs of the people in the Church? (nourishing us with God's Word and Sacraments, protecting us from spiritual dangers, leading us with their example of obedience and love for Christ.) How have spiritual leaders in your life, like your parents or godparents, shepherded you?*

*SAY: It really is amazing how much God cares about us and takes care of us! Next time, we'll talk more about the best way he cares for his sheep—by dying on the cross for our sins! But he cares for us in so many other ways, too. Can you think of how God loves and cares for you every day?*

- **BUILD A CURRACH:** Go to p. 10 of the Student Pages to find directions for this fun craft.
- **DECODE THE QUOTE:** Direct your group to p. 12 of the Student Pages to complete the puzzle.
- **CLOSING PRAYER:** *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Dearest Lord, thank you for your care for us. Thank you for giving us your Word and Sacraments, and thank you for our Priest, our Bishop, and our Pope who help us to follow you. Thank you for giving us your Son, who saves us from our sins. And thank you for your Holy Spirit that lives in our hearts and helps us to follow you. Amen.*

*Leader: Saint Patrick.*

*All: Pray for us.*

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen*

- **PLANNING AHEAD:** Take a look at p. 14 of the Student Pages and decide ahead of time how your group will complete the **ENCOURAGE YOUR SHEPHERD SERVICE PROJECT**. Also be prepared to explore some tough questions in **WHAT IS THE TRINITY?** worksheet on p. 15 and make sure you have supplies for the **TRINITY CRAFT** as outlined on p. 16.

**NOTE:** Refer to the answer key on p. 21 for answers to selected Student Pages.





## Session 4: The Good Shepherd

**FOCUS:** Jesus lays down his own life for the sheep.

**THEME VERSE:** "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."  
John 10:11

- **PREPARE:** Gather the supplies for **TRINITY CRAFT** as noted on p.16 of the Student Pages. Review the materials in **WHAT IS THE TRINITY?** worksheet for helpful Bible passages and consider referring to your own church's preferred creeds and catechisms to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity with your group.

Ensure you have what you need for the **ENCOURAGE YOUR SHEPHERD** project.

Print out your theme verse and hide it with the staff for **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME**.

- **GET PATRICK HOME MAZE:** Complete the maze on p.13 of the Student Pages.
- **ENCOURAGE YOUR SHEPHERD SERVICE PROJECT:** See p.14 of the Student Pages.
- **SHEPHERD'S STAFF BIBLE TIME:** Ask your group to search for the hidden staff. When it is found, invite them into your Bible area.

READ: John 10:11

*SAY: As we've read through Psalm 23 and studied God's Word, we've talked a lot about how God is like a shepherd. In this verse, Jesus says that he IS the GOOD shepherd. Let's read the following verses to find out more.*

READ: John 10:12-18

*DISCUSS: How is Jesus the good shepherd, according to this passage? What does he mean when he says he lays down his life for his sheep? What happens after he lays down his life? Why does Jesus have authority to take up his life again? What do we learn about Jesus and his relationship to the Father?*

*SAY: We find a lot of important truths about Jesus in these verses. Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he loves his flock—his people—so much that he will lay down his life for them. Just as John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life," Jesus tells us God's plan of salvation in John 10. The Good Shepherd laid down his life, but he didn't stay dead forever, did he? Verse 17 says that Jesus will take his life up again—and he did that when he rose again from the dead after three days! We also see that because he is the perfect Son of God, our Good Shepherd has power over both sin and death. Because he IS God—equal to the Father in power and glory—he alone is able to save his sheep. That means that only Jesus can forgive our sins and give us eternal life.*



DISCUSS: *Why did Jesus need to die for us? Why is it so important that he came back to life? How can you trust the Good Shepherd? What sacraments did the Good Shepherd institute for the forgiveness of sins? (Baptism, Confession)*

- **WHAT IS THE TRINITY? WORKSHEET AND CRAFT:** Complete p. 15 in the Student Pages and refer students to pp. 16-17 for craft and instructions.
- **PRAYER:** *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Fairest Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, thank you for laying down your life on the cross and taking it up again in your resurrection. Thank you for the hope of eternal life we find only in you. We ask that you forgive us of our sins, and help us, like sheep, to follow you in obedience and thankfulness. Amen.*

Leader: *Saint Patrick.*

All: *Pray for us.*

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**NOTE:** Refer to the answer key on p. 21 for answers to selected Student Pages.

Dear Parents,

Today in class your child viewed a *Catholic Heroes of the Faith* DVD depicting the life of Saint Patrick, the widely celebrated missionary to Ireland. Though much legend surrounds Saint Patrick's life, his true story shows the goodness of God's purposes and His leading through all circumstances.

Patrick was the son of a Roman official and Church deacon in Britain. Enjoying a privileged life in his villa on the coast, Patrick remained apathetic toward his Catholic faith. But when Irish pirates raided his home and sold the teenaged Patrick into captivity as a lowly tender of sheep, he learned to call upon the God of his youth. He escaped and returned home after six years with a thriving faith of his own, where he pursued theological training and eventually received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. As a bishop of the Church, Patrick felt God calling him back to the place of his slavery—this time, to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

During our time together, we will focus on the theme, "The Good Shepherd." We will explore how Sacred Scripture uses shepherd and sheep imagery as parallels to God's character, His people, and His plan in redemptive history. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



## Key People in *The Story of Saint Patrick*

**CALPURNIUS** – Patrick's father, a Roman nobleman, and official ruling a region of Britain. A wealthy man, Calpurnius owned a farm on the British or Scottish coast with many servants, several of whom were killed in the raid that captured Patrick. While previous research had assumed Calpurnius was a church deacon (as shown in this *Catholic Heroes of the Faith* episode), some more recent scholarship suggests that Calpurnius and Patrick's family may have been opposed to Patrick's conversion to Christianity.

**CONCHESSA** – Patrick's mother, who was from Gaul (France). No other reliable details are known about her.

**CATHBAD** – Cathbad represents a number of Druid priests who would have advised Irish kings during this time period. In Irish mythology, Cathbad was a great and highly respected Druid.

**CHIEF SESENNEN** [Sescnean or Sesgnean] – In *The Story of Saint Patrick*, Chief Sesenen represents a number of Irish kings with whom Patrick had contact, including his own captors. Historically, however, Sesenen was an Irish nobleman who lived on the great plain of Bregia. It is believed he opened his home to Patrick, who was traveling to celebrate Easter at Tara. Patrick converted him to Christianity and baptized him along with his whole family.

**AEDEN** – Better-known as Benean, Aeden would have been around seven years old when he met Patrick. A son of Sesenen, he attached himself to Patrick, who renamed him Benignus. Benean became a leading Christian—Patrick's favorite and most trusted disciple. Eventually he received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, he became a bishop. Among his important contributions to Irish history was a Book of Rights, describing the prerogatives of the various kings of Ireland, especially those of his own forefathers the kings of Munster.



## Roman Britain, Pagan Ireland, and the Cross

Saint Patrick, one of Ireland's most famous saints, wasn't born Irish. He was a Roman. About fifty years before Jesus was born, the Romans invaded Britain. Julius Caesar had been fighting the Celts in his famous Gallic wars. Some had fled to the British Isles, and he went after them twice, but sailed away both times without conquering the islands. In the following century, Emperor Claudius began a permanent conquest in AD 43. By 77, Rome controlled all of the region now known as England, as well as the lower parts of Scotland, building forts and cities at strategic places—forts they tied together with sturdy roads. Among the modern cities they occupied or founded were London, St. Albans, Colchester, York, Chester, Bath, Lincoln, and Gloucester. Unable to control fierce Scots raiders, Emperor Hadrian ordered a wall built across northern England in 122.

Many years later, as early as 224 but possibly as late as 415, Conchessa, the wife of Calpurnius, a Roman official in Britain gave birth to Patricius (Patrick). Patrick grew up on a small farm near a village on the western coast at the far northern edge of Rome's British holdings. The Roman hold on the region was weak, and the neighboring Celts and Picts often attacked it.

Because his father was a Latin-speaking Roman nobleman and magistrate, Patrick's childhood home was most likely a pleasant Roman-style villa, not the crude hut of a commoner. He was surrounded by many servants. When the Irish made a huge raid on Briton, taking thousands of slaves, the invaders slew many of the servants in Patrick's home. They captured the sixteen-year-old boy.

Patrick had some knowledge of true faith before his enslavement. The British Isles had long had a Christian presence. According to a late tradition, Joseph of Arimathea evangelized in the isles within forty years of Christ's death. Although that is unlikely, Christianity certainly made its way to Britain early on. Saint Alban died a martyr at the hand of Romans, possibly around the time Patrick was a child. Evidence supports the claim that Patrick was alive before the tolerance and legitimization of Christianity, but many traditions have Patrick's life beginning after the faith's legalization. Either way, Saint Patrick's writings show that his faith was often tested.

Sold as a slave in Ireland, he was forced to tend sheep and pigs. Cold, hungry, lonely, and thirsty, Patrick cried out to God night and day and began to hear from the Spirit. Six years later, Patrick escaped on foot to the coast where he was taken on to a ship bound for his homeland. In captivity he had learned the Celtic language and Celtic ways, and even after escaping, his heart became increasingly concerned for the Irish. Ireland was ruled by many local kings, some of them fierce and cruel. The king who had owned Patrick, for instance, displayed the severed heads of his enemies on spikes. Druids advised these kings in legal, historical, and religious matters and practiced magic and claimed to foretell the future. The Irish worshiped many gods and bowed to idols.

After getting theological training and receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders to be a bishop, Patrick sensed the call to return to Ireland, against his family's wishes. Nonetheless he returned to preach the gospel in Ireland. The hardships he had endured equipped him for success. Patrick met much opposition, but boldly faced his enemies head-on. He taught them to serve the one true God and convinced many that their gods were demons. Many Irish believed, resulting in a changed country. Meanwhile in Scotland, England, and the rest of the European continent, Barbarian conquests and corruption had caused Christianity to flicker low. Ireland later sent missionaries to these countries, ironically evangelizing those who had once evangelized them. As a result, Ireland became a center for preservation of the gospel during the Middle Ages.





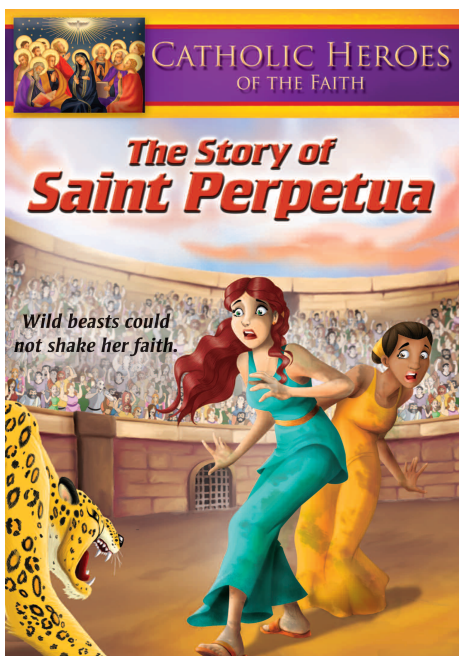
## Saint Patrick Timeline

Note: Saint Patrick's dates are uncertain. Military and political events before and after his life are well-documented, but the dates of early British Church history were not recorded at the time, making them hard to pin down. This timeline is based on the dates suggested in various historic sources, although some historians place Saint Patrick's life as early as the 3rd century.

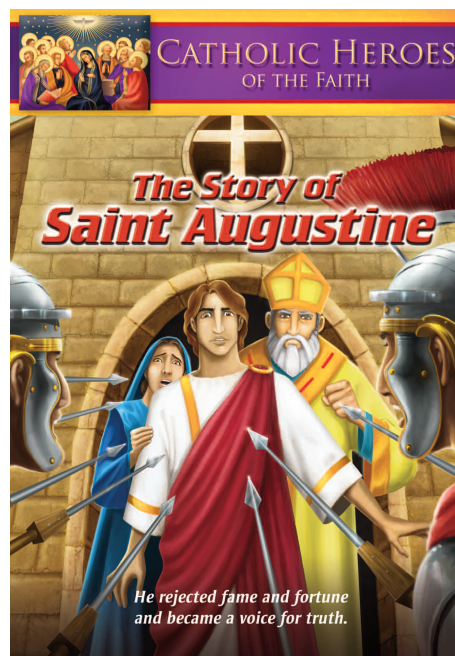
<b>55–54 BC</b>	Julius Caesar invades Britain
<b>AD 43–79</b>	Romans conquer Britain and Southern Scotland
<b>c. 63</b>	Joseph of Arimathea allegedly brings the Gospel and the Holy Grail to Britain
<b>122–139</b>	Emperor Hadrian visits Britain and orders a wall to keep Scots out
<b>c. 209</b>	Saint Alban is martyred [or as late as 304]
<b>311</b>	Emperor Galerius issues an edict of toleration for Christians
<b>312</b>	Constantine legalizes Christianity
<b>c. 387 (or 415)</b>	Patrick born
<b>403 or 430</b>	Irish raid the Britons taking thousands of slaves, likely including Patrick
<b>410 or 437</b>	Patrick escapes Ireland
<b>433 or 461</b>	Patrick returns to Ireland; by bringing the faith in peace, he wins many to Christ, including Sesenen and Benignus
<b>c. 450s</b>	Patrick writes a scathing letter to Coroticus condemning his raiding and enslavement of Irish Christians
<b>461 or 492</b>	Patrick dies



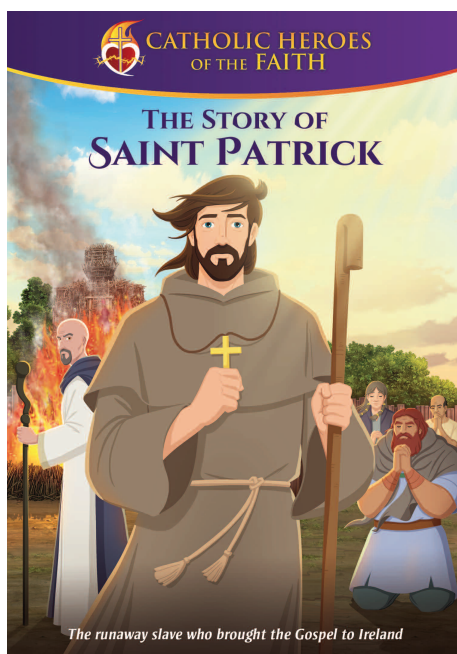
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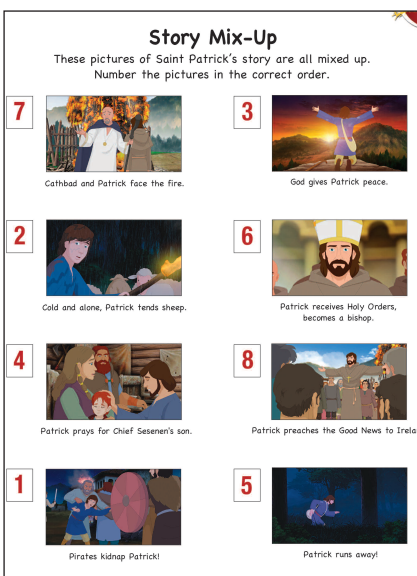


## Answer Key for Select Student Pages

### Legends of Saint Patrick Word Search, p. 7



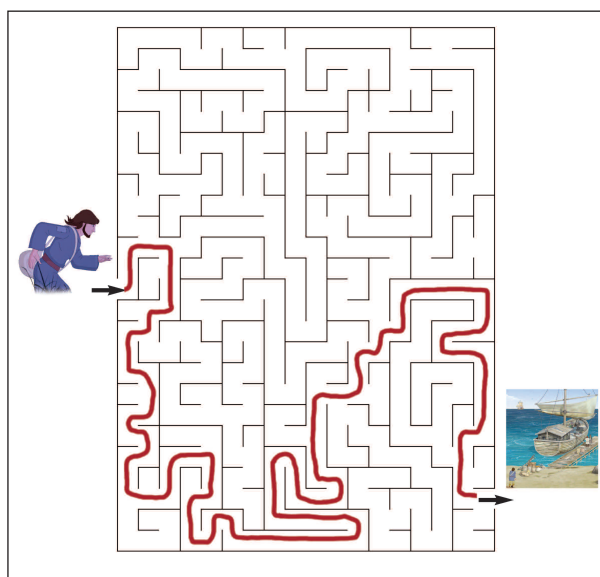
### Story Mix-Up, p. 8



### Decode the Quote by Saint Patrick, p. 12

"I arise today through a mighty strength...through belief in the threeness, through confession of the oneness of the Creator."

### Get Patrick Home Maze, p. 13



### What is the Trinity? p. 15

