

We all know that today is the feast of St. Patrick, a celebration of the man who is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland. Whether you can trace your heritage back to Ireland or not, everybody is Irish today, and green food, green drinks, and green clothing are all used to celebrate the acts of this saint and the Irish culture that developed from it.

We are all familiar with the story of St. Patrick. He was a teenager living in Britain when he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave. He worked there for several years until he escaped and went home. He later returned to Ireland as a bishop, working to convert the Irish pagans to Christianity. He used the shamrock to describe the trinity in his teachings and drove the snakes off the island.

Although many parts of the legend of St. Patrick may not be true, the basic details we have about the man send a strong message to us all. Patrick heard God calling for him to spread the faith, and he acted upon it. He was called to evangelize, and did. It was not easy, it seems as if it never is when God calls a person to do something, but Patrick had faith in God and faith in his work; much like Abraham or Jesus, who trusted God and did the difficult thing. This is also similar of our new pope, Francis. Being the pope, in some respects, is like being the President: it's a difficult job that no sane person would want. But upon being elected, we never hear of someone turning down the position, because God has made the choice through the College of Cardinals. Trust in God is asked of the elected pope just like it was asked of Patrick, and just like it is asked of us.

I find it interesting that such a widely-celebrated holiday always falls during Lent. During this time of the liturgical year, we see intensified campaigns by churches across the world, asking people to come back to the Church or to come for the first time. The Church is trying to evangelize the way Patrick did, reaching out in an attempt to grow the community of faith in both number and strength. We are currently also in what is called the New Evangelization, where we are all asked to take part in spreading the faith and inviting people back. In this way, we are all called to be like St. Patrick and to bring faith to a place where it is nonexistent or is not very strong. This is something especially important for the Knights of Columbus, since we are such a visible and active group within the Church.

Although many people may think that this feast day is solely for the purpose of celebrating Irish culture, the man behind it must be remembered. Just like on Christmas when we get presents under a tree, celebrating the holiday is meaningless without understanding what is behind it. We must remember that as Knights we are called to be like St. Patrick in the New Evangelization and to spread our faith. We also must be attentive to our own calling from God, and through prayer find the strength to trust God and to follow our calling.