

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

This month, we celebrate our history, our culture, and our religion through St. Patrick. We do this with parades, parties, cultural events and more. We revel in our Irish roots. We proudly and loudly display who we are.

St. Patrick, as we all know, was most responsible for the bringing Christianity to Ireland. His work led to the development of the monasteries where religion, literature and history were recorded. These monks in turn re-educated Europe in the Middle Ages. Without his influences, all of Europe would have remained in the Dark Ages and much of its history would have been lost.

St. Patrick is also credited with explaining the Trinity by using a three leafed shamrock. This symbol remains a central part of our culture and Catholic religion, a religion that many of our own have sacrificed their lives for, even to this day. The impact of St. Patrick was and is profound.

Why however, do we venerate and celebrate St. Patrick? His powerful influence is indisputable. There are also other powerful and symbolic influences in our culture and history.

There is Cuchulain the legendary giant. There is "The Liberator" Daniel O'Connell. There is Robert Emmet, Wolf Tone, St.. Colmeille, St.. Brendan, Brian Boru, and others. Why St. Patrick?

Today it may seem simple. This is St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. The most recognized name connected with our beloved religion, culture, and homeland. There is certainly, more to it than this.

The celebration of St. Patrick's Day in the United States began 250 years ago. At that time, it certainly would have been easier, safer, and more popular to celebrate someone less "symbolic" than St. Patrick. At that time, and for many years after, Catholics were generally distrusted and despised.

The only thing more distrusted and despised was the Irish Catholic.

So why would the Irish Catholics bring such potentially negative

attention upon themselves in such an atmosphere of hatred? Perhaps it was because of the hatred and distrust with which the Irish race had been treated throughout much of history. Our religion and our culture have, and continue to, sustain us through the persecutions. We have, and do, suffer and die rather than to be anything other than Irish and Catholic. As a people we have never succumbed to the easy way out in this life. We have always known the truth that we must be true to our beliefs in order to be honest with ourselves and to deserve the eternal reward.

We as Irish Catholics must always remember how and why the others have suffered and died before us. We must remember that when we march with well earned and deserved pride that there are millions of the souls of our brethren marching with us. These are the souls of our ancestors who suffered discrimination that we today cannot possibly imagine. The St. Patrick's Day celebrations that they started and maintained were to show those who so hated and dehumanized them that they were of a proud, religious, and cultured race.

Because of the discrimination and suffering of our ancestors, we have never lost the pride of who we are and from where we came. That is why it is of paramount importance that throughout all of the parades, parties, and cultural celebrations, we hold our heads high and conduct ourselves as Irish, Catholic, American Gentlemen. We owe this to those who came before, to ourselves, and to those who will, with pride in their Irish Catholic heritage, come after us.

Happy St.. Patrick's Day

**David Ring
Division 7 and Suffolk County Irish Historian**