Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick is the **patron saint** of Ireland, known for introducing Christianity to the country.

Early Life

Not much is known for certain about Saint Patrick because he lived such as long time ago. He is thought to have been born in the 5th century in a town along the west coast of Britain. His family were thought to be very wealthy because his father, Calpurnius, held a very important title in Ancient Rome. Patrick's grandfather, Potitus, was a Catholic priest and it is thought that his whole family believed in Christianity. However, Patrick was not religious himself.

Patrick's Capture and Escape

When Patrick was 16 years old, he was captured by a group of Irish pirates. He was taken to Ireland where he was made to work as a slave. While Patrick was a slave, he was made to work as a shepherd. During this time, he began to pray to God. After six years as a slave, Patrick heard a voice telling him that he would be able to go home soon because a ship was waiting for him. That night, Patrick fled from where he was being kept and made his way to a **port**, 200 miles away. He found a ship that was almost ready to set sail and, with difficulty, managed to persuade the ship's captain to take him away from Ireland.

The Wild Boar

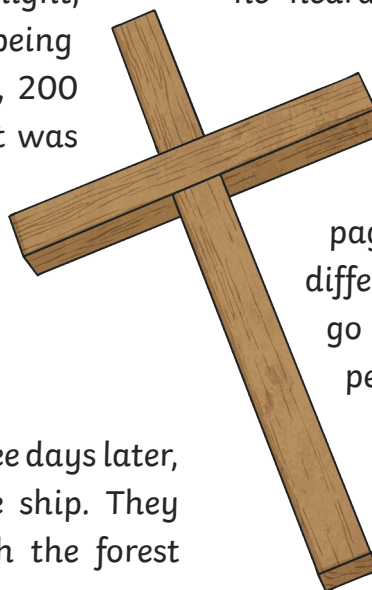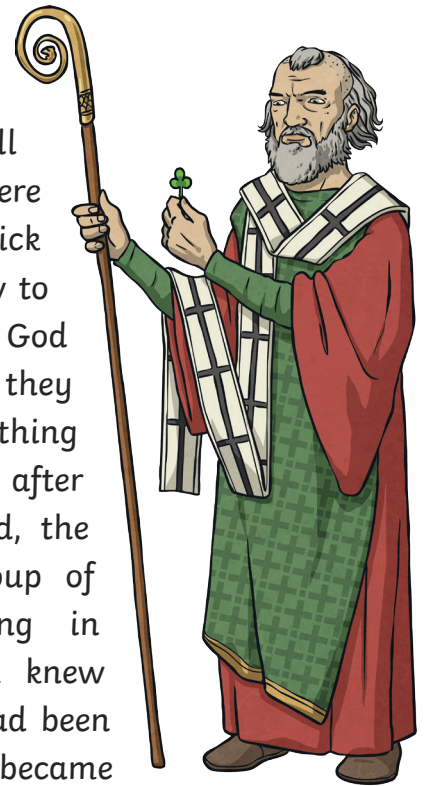When the boat reached Britain three days later, Patrick and the crew all left the ship. They are said to have walked through the forest for 28 days and began to feel unwell because they were so hungry. Patrick told the ship's crew to put their faith in God and prayed that they would find something to eat soon. Soon after Patrick had prayed, the crew found a group of wild pigs roaming in the forest. Patrick knew that his prayers had been answered and became stronger in his faith.

Patrick Returns to Ireland

After spending a long time studying, Patrick became a Christian **priest**. One night, a few years after returning home, Patrick said that he heard a voice telling him to return to Ireland and help the Irish people. Patrick knew that many of the people of Ireland were not Christians; they were known as pagans and they worshipped many different gods. Patrick bravely chose to go back to Ireland and teach the Irish people about Christianity.

Patrick converted thousands of Irish people to Christianity and began building churches across the

country. Patrick was well-known for using things that Irish people already knew about to explain Christianity to them. One of these examples was the shamrock – a plant with three leaves. Patrick used the shamrock to teach people about the Holy Trinity.

After teaching about Christianity for over 40 years, Patrick died on 17th March 461. After his death, Patrick was called a saint because of how holy and religious he had been throughout his life. The people of Ireland have never forgotten how special Patrick was to their country.

Glossary
patron saint – The saint who protects or guides a person or place.

port – A town or city with a harbour where ships are loaded or unloaded.

priest – A person who is allowed to perform religious ceremonies.