March 17

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Patrick of Ireland (ca. 390-ca. 461) pastor

Today the Western churches commemorate Patrick, an evangelist and the first bishop of Ireland.
Born in Cornwall, England around the year 390, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates at the age of fifteen and sold as a slave in Ireland. During the six years he spent in captivity working as a shepherd, his loneliness was transformed by the growing consolation of the Lord's presence in his heart.
He fled from Ireland, studied to be ordained to the priesthood, and may have spent time in a monastery in Gaul. It is not certain whether he ever took monastic vows, although he clearly loved monks and their life of closeness to God. In an effort to improve his poor Latin, Patrick read the Bible daily, and in it he finally found his vocation to announce the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
In 432 Patrick was sent to Ireland to serve as bishop. For the next thirty years he travelled throughout the island preaching the Gospel, establishing Christian communities, and organizing already existing scattered groups of Christians. As a foreigner, he was frequently ridiculed by the natives, and many in the Church opposed him, considering him uncultured. Still, Patrick's humanism and passion for the Gospel helped him remain joyful as he carried out his mission. In his autobiographical Confession he writes about his missionary experience using language directly inspired by the Gospel.
It is not known where Patrick died, but the year was probably close to 461. An abundant harvest of legends sprung from the soil of his life, making him one of the best loved saints of the entire Middle Ages.

BIBLICAL READINGS
Isa 51:1-11; Rev 22:1-5; Mt 10:16-23

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Patrick of Ireland, bishop and missionary, patron saint of Ireland

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Patrick, bishop (Roman calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (8 baramhat/maggabit):
Matthias, apostle

LUTHERANS:
Patrick of Ireland, bishop and missionary

MARONITES:
Joseph of Arimatea; *Alexis «the man of God»* (d. 411)
Patrick, bishop

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Alexis «the man of God»
Daniel of Moscow (d. 1303), founder of St Daniel Monastery (Russian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Patrick, bishop and missionary