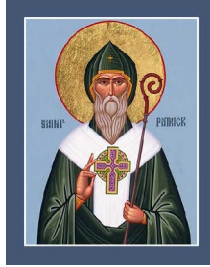


Celebrate St. Patrick's Day!



What comes to your mind when you think of St. Patrick's Day? 4-leaf clovers? Shamrock decorations? Green beer? Maybe it's wearing green in order to prevent getting yourself pinched (not sure where this tradition came from). While these are fun things the significance of this day encompasses so much more than these traditions. The life of St. Patrick is modeled so closely after Jesus and is one worthy of imitating. His mission to the Irish Celtic people is an inspiring and significant story.

Patrick grew up culturally "Roman." His family was Christian and his grandfather was a priest. Patrick was known to ridicule clergy and he hung out with other 'wild' youth. At the age of 16, Patrick was captured by Celtic pirates and sold into slavery. During enslavement, Patrick became a devout Christian and experienced significant change in his life. As a result of some revealing dreams during this time, Patrick would clearly know his life's direction and purpose- *to take the gospel to the Celtic peoples of Ireland.*

Patrick was considered by the British Church leaders to be a rebel. At that time the Church had certain expectations for its leaders. The primary expectations included administrating existing churches and caring for the faithful Christians. In contrast to this, Patrick felt called to a more apostolic mission to pre-Christian populations, which included spending time with and developing relationships with those who did not yet know Christ. The British leaders were offended and angered that Patrick was spending priority time with "pagans", "sinners", and "barbarians" and it caused great tension between them.

St. Patrick's mission of reaching the Irish Celtic people with the gospel was guaranteed to be a daunting and unprecedented task and was thought by many to be virtually impossible because these people were considered "barbarians". The Roman Church believed that a population, by definition, had to be literate and rational enough to understand Christianity, and cultured and civil enough to become real Christians if they *did* understand it. For this reason no mission effort to these people was ever organized by the Roman Church and they felt that Patrick's mission was destined to fail.

The Roman model for reaching people (who are "civilized" enough) is this:

- 1) Present the Christian message
- 2) Invite them to decide to believe in Christ and become Christians
- 3) If they decide positively, welcome them into the church and its fellowship.

In other words, we explain the gospel, they accept Christ, and we welcome them into the church- presentation, decision, assimilation (P. 53).

The contrasting Celtic model for reaching people is this:

- 1) You first establish community with people, or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith.
- 2) Within fellowship, you engage in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship
- 3) In time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to commit (P. 53).

It was through this model that many Celtic “barbarian” people were reached with the Gospel of Christ through Patrick’s life and mission. We consider St. Patrick’s model in reaching the culture of *his* day as fantastic example of how we can influence and reach the culture we live, work and play in today. His life has been very influential on our lives and his mission to reach those that others thought were “unreachable” motivates us to do the same.*

So, other than green beer and shamrocks, how can you celebrate St. Patty’s Day? Here’s an idea: How about making some vows? Most of the time you hear about “making vows” in the context of a wedding ceremony, or perhaps when entering priesthood or a Monastery. If you want to do any of those things to celebrate the day, go for it! But that’s not exactly what we had in mind. We’d like to introduce to you the idea of making vows in the *Sacred Order of the Mustard Seed*.

We first heard of the Order of the Mustard Seed from the [blog](#) of Andrew Jones and much of what we share here has been gleaned from Peter Grieg’s book, [The Vision and the Vow](#).** The [Order of the Mustard Seed](#). is a rule of life, or a framework that a person can base their life on. It is a philosophy and a set of principles that will help you bring your life into alignment with Christ’s the priorities of His Kingdom. Grieg quotes Oswald Chambers, “The greatest enemy of the life of faith is not sin, but good choices which are not quite good enough. The good is always the enemy of the best.” (p159) The truth is that it’s way too easy to get caught up doing the “good” that we think we should do and miss out on “the best” things that Christ has asked us to build our lives around. Having a rule for life, like the Order of the Mustard Seed, can serve as a “filter” to help us make consistent decisions on what is best according to Kingdom standards. The ABC’s might help you remember:

A is for alignment, choosing what is best by Kingdom standards.

B is for balanced: Find an enjoyable, balanced rhythm of life so it will be sustainable. (Our friends at Off the Map say, “Do what’s do-able. That’s all you’re going to do anyway!”)

C is for centering on God and flowing from a place of prayer and worship.

The Order of the Mustard Seed offers three principles as a rule for life. Taking vows in this order means that you desire to be **True to Christ** (Matthew 22:28), **Kind to People** (Matthew 22:39), and the **Gospel to the Nations**. (Matthew 29:19-20)

Grieg points out some interesting things about Jesus' ministry that were very similar to St. Patrick and some things we think are still worthy of imitating.

Jesus was highly *relational*. His approach to ministry was primarily *organic* and *interactive* rather than didactic and mechanistic. However, He was also very *focused* and *intentional* about everything that he did. (154)

To take vows in this Order is to profess the desire to journey through life with kingdom soul mates asking yourself three questions: How can I be true to Christ today? How can I be kind to people today? How can I be the gospel to the nations today? Asking the questions is the first (and the easy!) part. The fulfillment of these vows involves making adjustments in your life in order to answer them according to Kingdom principles.

There are lots of different ways you can celebrate St. Patrick's Day. We are choosing to celebrate St. Patrick's Day this year by publicly making vows in this rule of life called the *Order of the Mustard Seed* as we live for Him and make the Kingdom of God our primary concern.

* Much of this information was adapted from *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* by George Hunter III

** This (and many other fine books!) is available through [Bean Books](#).



Jim and Rob have been friends since Jr. High School. Jim lives in Metro Detroit, MI and Rob lives in Sacramento, CA. They have a [combined blog](#) promoting missional living. They both have a personal blog as well were you take a peek into their daily lives. Jim is [here](#) and Rob is [here](#). Big thanks also go to Jim's wife [Syndie](#) who helped edit this article.

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