



St. Patrick  
Bishop and Apostle of Ireland

# **ST. PATRICK**

## **His Confession**

### **and Other Works**

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## FOREWORD

**M**OST people know of some of the popular traditions associated with St. Patrick such as the casting out of all snakes from Ireland or the use of the shamrock as a symbol of the Trinity. However relatively few have ever read the Saint's two surviving works translated in this small book. It is our hope that by reading the *Confessio* and the *Letter to Coroticus and His Soldiers* (which modern historians unanimously accept as having come from the pen of St. Patrick himself) many more people can get to meet St. Patrick the man and discover his relevance for the twenty-first century.

The texts have been translated with the aim of letting St. Patrick speak for himself, without encumbering them with many notes or entering into discussions that are only of interest to specialists.<sup>1</sup> A number of other sections have been added to this work to help us meet St. Patrick. *The Life of St. Patrick* is taken from the 1911 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and provides a fuller historical picture drawing on later historical documents and traditions. Likewise the beautiful discourse of Pope John Paul II from his pastoral visit to Drogheda (within the archdiocesan boundaries of Armagh whose bishop is the successor of St. Patrick and Primate of All Ireland) is a very moving reminder from the succes-

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<sup>1</sup> I have translated from the Latin original as found in David R. Howlett, *The Book of Letters of Saint Patrick the Bishop* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994). Those interested in continuing to study St. Patrick and his world are advised to consult the Further Reading list at the end of this book.

sor of Peter of the continued relevance of Ireland's Apostle. Finally this book ends with a newly composed Novena to St. Patrick based on early Irish sources and the official Mass of St. Patrick for personal prayer.

It is our hope that this little book will help foster devotion to St. Patrick anew and help yet another generation of Christians to join their lives to Christ in prayer as St. Patrick himself did so many years ago as a slave herding sheep on the barren mountain of Slemish.

Fr. Neil Xavier O'Donoghue  
Kearny, New Jersey  
Feast of St. Brigid, Abbess,  
Secondary Patron of Ireland  
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## The *Confessio* or Confession of St. Patrick

*The Confessio of St. Patrick cannot be considered an autobiography in the modern sense. While it would be nice to have a modern autobiography of Ireland's national Saint, the Confessio is, perhaps, a still more important document. Although it may not contain as many details about St. Patrick's life as we would like, it gives us a window into his soul. What matters for us today is not so much that we might identify the exact location of Bannauenta Berniae or the wood of Voclut. What truly matters, and what the Confessio offers to us, is the possibility to partake of the same divine life that St. Patrick brought to Ireland.*

*St. Patrick's world of the fifth century in Western Europe was an adventurous time coming between the Roman Empire and the birth of the Middle Ages. As the old order of the Empire passed away a new Europe was born. The unity of this new Europe was to be based on a common Christian heritage. As missionaries embarked on their apostolic expeditions, new lands were incorporated into this new Christendom. Ireland was in fact the first new region to be evangelized outside the frontiers of the Roman Empire and so brought into the fold of Chris-*



## St. Patrick

**Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran (1830-1911),  
Archbishop of Sydney**

*Cardinal Moran was born in Ireland and was orphaned at a young age. He was placed in the care of his uncle Cardinal Cullen who was then rector of the Irish College in Rome. Here the future Cardinal Moran completed his schooling and eventually discerned a vocation to the priesthood. His great academic and personal capacities were soon recognized in Rome and he became a professor at some of the most important Roman universities. Eventually he was named coadjutor bishop of Ossory (located in the South East of Ireland in the counties of Kilkenny, Laois and Offaly). He took part in the First Vatican Council. In 1884 he was transferred to the See of Sydney in Australia where he played a very important role in the establishment of the Church in Australia and also New Zealand. He always retained a love for early Irish ecclesiastical history and wrote many books on the Irish Church and her Saints. This entry in the 1911 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia was one of the last works he penned. In addition to St. Patrick's own writings Cardinal Moran relies on ancient biographies of St.*



## Pope John Paul II

**On my knees I beg you to  
turn away from violence**

*The following is the text of Pope John Paul II's homily at Killineer, near Drogheda, County Louth, on Saturday, October 29th, 1979. On the occasion of Pope John Paul II's apostolic visit to Ireland (the first such visit to Ireland by any Pope) the Pope desired to make a pilgrimage to Armagh whose Archbishop is the successor of St. Patrick. However the political situation in the North of Ireland (where Armagh is located) made such a visit impossible. Therefore the Pope celebrated Mass with 300,000 of the faithful in attendance near Drogheda, a town in the Republic which is within the Archdiocese of Armagh and near the border. This pilgrimage had great meaning for the Pope himself and here he also strongly exhorted the people of Ireland to work for peace and justice.*

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

Having greeted the soil of Ireland today on my arrival in Dublin, I make my first Irish journey to this place, to Drogheda. The cry of centuries sends me here.

I arrive as a pilgrim of faith, I arrive also as successor of Peter, to whom Christ has given a particular