

Another stunning parable from the Master Teacher. A young man whose life is misdirected by the love of riches and pleasure. After his so-called friends abandoned him when his money ran out, and he was drawn into a life of hunger for a period of time, until he came to his senses and went home to his father. This young man had changed and fortunately he had a loving and forgiving father who accepted him back unconditionally. The point of the story is made clear when we see the embrace of father and son.

Now I want to tell you of another young man who found himself in a similar situation. This young man was Catholic but not a very good one. His father was a government official, so this young man enjoyed the comforts of those who were well off. As his story goes, this young man was kidnapped and sold as a slave to work on a farm for 6 years in a foreign country. Like the prodigal son, this young man suffered without adequate food or shelter. Through his hardship he learned obedience. He said, "God showed me how to have faith in him forever, as one who is never to be doubted."

With God's guidance the young man was able to escape and return to his family. But as his family discovered he was a new man and they were not able to keep him home. God had other plans. This man was ordained to the priesthood and was drawn to return to the people who had kidnapped and enslaved him. He wanted to teach them about God and the love that he had for them. This calling wasn't easy and he ran into resistance from the church hierarchy. But he overcame those obstacles and returned to the land of his captors as a bishop. The welcome was less than cordial, but he persevered in his call and his work was blessed. He ordained bishops and priests, and he established convents, monasteries, and schools.

This man who endured so much was St. Patrick and in 30 years he saw the conversion of almost all of Ireland. When one has faith, it is remarkable the work that can be accomplished.

The faith of St. Patrick is best described in his prayer,

## The Breastplate.

Christ be within me/ Christ behind me/ Christ before me  
Christ beside me/ Christ to win me/ Christ to comfort and  
restore me/ Christ beneath me/ Christ above me/  
Christ inquired/ Christ in danger/  
Christ in hearts of all that love me/  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.