

SAINT PATRICK - APOSTLE OF IRELAND

Saint Patrick was a Roman citizen of fifth century Britain, born into the Roman patrician class tasked with civilizing the wild frontier on the empire's edge - Britain. At the age of 15, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold into slavery to an Irish druid to become a shepherd, forced to live outdoors in harsh conditions caring for his flock. Suffering prompted a conversion of heart and formed him physically, emotionally and spiritually, transforming him into the mighty shepherd for the faithful he evangelized during dangerous and brutal times in Ireland.

The Gospels

St. Patrick holds the red Gospel book reverently with his garment, careful not to touch it with his bare hands. The cover displays the tetramorphs of the four evangelists in traditional Celtic style, gilded and embellished with semi-precious gemstones communicating its preciousness. Throughout history, familiar pagan symbols have been borrowed to establish common ground in teaching the Gospel, which is why we chose to highlight Irish culture on the Gospel book. The book is presented in the iconographic style, which does not follow linear perspective, because that is man's construct. Instead, it is visible from different angles all at once, perhaps as God sees it.

The Holy Spirit

St. Patrick is fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, present as the fiery red-orange wind emanating from the relic of St. Patrick embedded in the icon's gilded frame.

In iconography, the Holy Spirit can be represented by the heat of reds and oranges, as a flame, as a cloud, and as wind, which causes his chasuble to billow up in mushroom-shaped folds, lifting and supporting him in his fight against evil.

The orange-red sky is the dominant color scheme in the honorific position to St. Patrick's right, in deference to the relic of St. Patrick, positioned nearest to the Gospel - a powerful combination for fighting evil. The relic of St. Patrick was graciously donated by Fr. Jon Buffington.

Embellishments

The engraved frame is gilded in 23.75 karat gold and embellished with malachite cabochons. St. Patrick's halo is 23.75 karat red gold while the Gospels and crozier are gilded with white gold. The crozier is embellished with large and tiny garnets and carnelian. His pallium is lined with 24 karat shell gold and in the center of each Celtic cross is a 1mm opal. The Gospels are decorated with Hessonite garnets, rose cut red garnet cabochons, lapis lazuli and peridots.



The Power to Tread on Serpents

Amidst turbulence incited by evil, St. Patrick deftly pins the snake, symbol of paganism, under his bare foot. Through the Holy Spirit, he remains resolute, strong, and calm. The crozier represents the authority and pastoral care of the Church; the Gospels represent the Word of God; while St. Patrick's bare feet communicate his power and fortitude to overcome evil with the Word of God in one hand and the teaching of the Church in the other.

His bare feet remind us of his life as a teenage enslaved shepherd who lived unsheltered with the animals in a harsh climate, shivering from cold and fear. Praying up to 100 prayers a night, St. Patrick overcame fear and personal hardship to become a skillful combatant of evil and Christianize the Irish tribal culture.

Truly, he was given the power to tread on serpents. Lk 10:19

The Cliffs & Sea of Ireland

St. Patrick is centered on the island of Ireland, ringed by red brown cliffs both in reality and in the icon, surrounded by a tempestuous sea. This is a battle icon, intended to depict the dynamic motion of metaphysical and natural forces spiraling wildly around one who remains calm in the eye of the storm. As with the Gospel book, the perspective is not realistic or from man's point of view, but rather from what we imagine God can see - everything all at once and from all angles.

The Serpent

The serpent is the evil mirror to St. Patrick, beautiful and tempting, painted in the very same colors as St. Patrick but in darker shades, tinged with black, a color reserved for the literal and figurative privation of light. The triskelion, an ancient Celtic pagan symbol is painted on the serpent's head connecting the brutality of Irish pagan culture to the serpent's inclination to divide, cast doubt and propagate evil in the world. The snake is a metaphor for St. Patrick's conversion of Irish pagan tribes to Christianity. He keeps the snake in check physically with his feet and metaphorically with the crozier.