

Food for the Flock



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“Thoughts on St. Patrick . . . From a Couple of Irishmen”

As hard as I tried, I could not find a Schwenk, Marks, Jesberg, Finefrock, or Royer that hailed from Ireland. Lore has some Haggarty blood running through her veins, but I can only claim Slovakian, German, and French heritage, as much as I would like to claim a little bit of Irish ancestry. I came across a devotional this week from a few Ulstermen from Northern Ireland that helps put St. Patrick’s contributions to Christian history into perspective.

The contemporary Christian artists Rend Collective hail from the Emerald Island. In a post from a few years ago, they write: “Part of being from Northern Ireland means being fiercely proud of our heritage. It also means we have a love for the many stories and legends of Saint Patrick. Our favorite story is one that’s been passed down through generations, and it revolves around a massive campfire and the faithfulness of the early church in Ireland.

As a part of keeping his Easter Vigil in celebration of Christ rising from the dead, Saint Patrick lit an enormous bonfire on the Hill of Slane in the County of Meath. He lit this fire in spite of the High King of Tara, who had chosen the same night to light his own druid festival fire. The High King of Tara had prohibited the lighting of any rival fires in the country. But when night fell, two sources of light broke the darkness: the druid festival fire, and the bonfire of Saint Patrick. Outraged the High King commanded his men to extinguish Saint Patrick’s bonfire, but try as they might they could not put out the flames. Saint Patrick’s fire miraculously could not be extinguished. Eventually the High King surrendered his armies and surrendered his heart, in awe of St. Patrick’s God. They worshipped God that very day.

We love this story because it not only demonstrates God’s power, but it also is a beautiful picture of what it means to be ablaze for Christ. When Jesus speaks of the “city on a hill” that cannot be hidden, in the Sermon on the Mount, we picture a fire much like the one from this story. Jesus is not talking about a glaring neon festival of fluorescence like Las Vegas. There is no electricity in the New Testament. He is imagining a skyline illuminated by hundreds of single campfires, each surrounded by their own conversations, celebrations, hopes, dreams and healings. Our simple campfire gatherings can be powerfully missional because people are drawn to the light, heat and safety of Jesus and his Church. It is with this in mind that we celebrate St. Patrick’s day today. May we, as saints of Christ, invite others to join us around the campfire and worship the true High King of Heaven!”

Food for the Flock

So, this month when we celebrate the life and ministry of St. Patrick, let's look for opportunities to "light fires" of conversation, welcome, invitation, and sacrificial love with people we already have a relationship with. The fires we light just might intrigue others as they hear and see the Good News of Jesus Christ that's evident in our lives. The culture that surrounded St. Patrick is not much different from the culture surrounding us today. People worship many false gods just like they did in Patrick's day. They need to see Jesus, the Light of the World, living in us.

"Let your light shine" in this dark world. Thank God for the example of St. Patrick.

Blessings,
Pastor Jim



<u>Date</u>	<u>Nursery Schedule</u>
March 5	Gloria Frey & Jean Weaver
March 12	Diane & Audrey Hoover
March 19	Diane Garrett & Elaine Freed
March 26	Lois Diem & Heather Schwenk

Mid-Week Lenten Service

This year we will be marking the season of Lent with our brothers and sisters from other Annville area churches. Services will begin at 12:00 and will be followed by a light lunch. The schedule is as follows:

- March 8- Gingrich's Mennonite Church
- March 15- St. Anthony Coptic Church
- March 22- Annville Church of the Brethren
- March 29- Lebanon Valley College
- April 5- St. Paul the Apostle
- April 14- Cross Walk

Bunny Burrow Marches On!

The next meeting of the Bunny Burrow will be held on Saturday March 11 at 10:00 a.m. Children from pre-school age to 3rd grade are welcome. Since it's only a few days from St. Patrick's Day, the day will have a very Irish feel to it. Children and the people who bring them are encouraged to wear green.

The Rabbit Room Welcomes "The Shack"

If you watch television, you have probably seen the commercials for the recently released movie, "The Shack." It is based on the book by William P. Young that generated a lot of discussion in Christian circles when it was released a number of years ago. On Monday March 27 at 7:00 p.m., the Rabbit Room book discussion group will meet at the Lebanon Valley Council on the Arts, 770 Cumberland Street in Lebanon. We will discuss the book "The Shack." Did you love it? Hate it? Either way, come out and share your thoughts and be open to hearing the thoughts of others, as we discuss this thought-provoking parable of meeting God in the present. Invite your friends! The Rabbit Room: Good books. Good conversation. Good tea!

During our April meeting on April 24, we will be discussing the book, "The Zookeeper's Wife," a true story about Christians in Warsaw, Poland protecting Jews during the Nazi occupation of World War II. A movie based on this book is also being released in a few weeks.