

SAINTS FOR THE SEASONS

by Patrick Rainville Dorn



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A collection of four monologues

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SYNOPSIS: These monologues put the “holy” back in several popular but misunderstood holidays. Four Christians with famous names but less familiar legacies step out of the past to share historically accurate accounts of their heroic yet sacrificial lives. Don’t let the word “saints” scare you off. These spiritual giants have much to teach us, yet there is an undercurrent of gentle humor that makes them eminently relatable.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1-4 male)

SAINT NICHOLAS OF MYRA

(December 6)

SAINT VALENTINE OF ROME

(February 14)

SAINT PATRICK OF IRELAND

(March 17)

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

(October 4)

DURATION: 4 scenes, 10 minutes each

PRODUCTION NOTES

Saints for the Seasons will foster a deeper understanding of the Christian role models behind four oft-neglected holidays, while entertaining and edifying the people of your church. For inspiration, humor, biblical truths and encouragement in the faith, mark your calendars and celebrate these *Saints for the Seasons*.

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Saint Nicholas of Myra

(December 6th)

THEMES: Generosity, Christian orthodoxy, Christmas, sailors

SYNOPSIS: Popularly referred to as Saint Nick, this early 4th century champion of biblical orthodoxy and prodigal generosity sets the record straight on how different he is from “the other guy”.

COSTUME: Church vestments suitable for a bishop. The costume does not need to be “in period,” because clergy outfits haven’t changed all that much in 1,500 years! Do an Internet image search for “Saint Nicholas Bishop” to see many traditional and modern costume ideas. The basic components are an alb (the white robe), the mitre (pointy hat), chasuble (the cape or “poncho”) worn over the alb, and the pectoral cross. Note that they are almost always white and red.

PROPS

- ☐ crozier (embellished shepherd’s crook)
- ☐ basket with chocolate coins
- ☐ either loose or in bags
- ☐ depending on the size of the congregation



1 **AT START:** SAINT NICHOLAS enters from the back of the church,
 2 greeting people along the way. He carries a basket with chocolate
 3 coins, either loose or in small bags. He gives them out with a spirit
 4 of gleeful, almost childlike generosity, handing them to parents if
 5 more appropriate, but focusing particularly on the children.
 6 **OPTIONAL:** gather the children to the front of the church for a
 7 “children’s sermon” and give out the candy before or after the
 8 monologue. Much of the monologue will be directed primarily to the
 9 children, but the adults should be included as often as possible.

10
 11 **SAINT NICHOLAS:** My name is Saint Nicholas, and I am the victim
 12 of identity theft.

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A lot of people mix me up with this Santa Claus guy. He gets credit for some of the things I've done, and I am mistaken for him all the time. Some people think we're one and the same person.

My name is Saint Nicholas, former bishop of Myra—*not* Santa Claus. So let me set the record straight, once and for all.

I was born to a well-to-do Greek family during the third century—that's the late 200s—in Patara, a coastal town in southern Asia Minor—what is now called Turkey. And please, no Thanksgiving jokes. Where I grew up, ships traveling from Italy to the Holy Land passed right by. I've always been fascinated by sailing ships, and I don't know the first thing about reindeer or the North Pole.

My parents raised me in the Christian faith, but they died from the plague when I was just a boy. My uncle, who was a bishop, adopted me. I decided to follow in my uncle's footsteps. I became a priest when I was still a young man.

Then, to show that I cared more about the treasures of heaven than the things of this world, I gave away my inheritance. All of it. My nest egg. My security. I gave all I had to the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Later, as a bishop, I actually became famous for my generosity, and I guess that's what I'm still remembered for today.

Now, there's something Santa and I have in common. It's better to give than to receive, and best of all is to cheerfully give all that we are, and all that we have, to the glory of God.

You see, when you give things away and expect nothing in return, people notice. They remember kindness. They wonder, why someone would do something like that? And that sort of wondering can lead them to God, who does that sort of giving all the time.

1 Jesus gave it all for us. I'd like to think that if anyone remembers
2 Saint Nicholas, they will be inspired to live lives of generosity.
3 The Lord tells us that the things we do for the least of these our
4 brothers and sisters, we do for him.

5
6 In the early days of the Church, every town had its own bishop.
7 Near my hometown was the large city of Myra. When the Bishop
8 of Myra died, bishops from the nearby towns got together to
9 decide who should replace him.

10
11 One of those bishops had a dream that I should become the new
12 bishop. I was still a young priest. It came as a surprise, I can tell
13 you. But the city of Myra is a port city, with lots of ships stopping
14 off to resupply. That connected me to the whole world and gave
15 me a chance to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the
16 sailors, who spread the Gospel wherever they sailed.

17
18 While I served as bishop to the people of Myra, a great famine
19 came across the land. Crops failed. People had nothing to eat.
20 But I knew that in the harbor were ships that were full of grain,
21 headed for Egypt. I asked the sailors to share one portion of
22 grain from each ship with the people of Myra. They refused.
23 They were afraid the Egyptians would be upset if their order was
24 short. I promised that they would not be punished. They trusted
25 me, or rather, they trusted in God. They shared from their cargo.
26 And when they got to Egypt, the inventory was full! The people
27 of Myra got all they needed, and the people in Egypt did, too.
28 Some people call that one of my miracles. But it wasn't *my*
29 miracle. It was God who worked the miracle. All I did was put my
30 faith and trust in the Lord, and in his love for his people.

31
32 Around the year 305, the Roman emperor Diocletian persecuted
33 the Christians. Anyone who refused to honor the Roman gods
34 was put in prison, or worse. Many faithful Christians in Myra
35 were locked up for their faith, and I was one of them. There were
36 so many bishops, priests, deacons, and regular Christians in jail,
37 there wasn't any room left for the real criminals. We were
38 crowding out the murderers, thieves, and robbers. It was a dark,

dirty, wretched place. I'm so glad I was sent there, however, because I could help the other Christian prisoners, bringing them the gifts of faith and hope.

A few years later, a new emperor came to power: Constantine. He was a friend of Christianity. There was a heresy going around called Arianism, named after an Egyptian priest named Arius. He claimed that Jesus wasn't really God. Others thought he was just a good man who spoke for God, like a prophet. And still others thought maybe he was an angel or some other kind of god. This was about the same time the books of the Bible were being gathered together and agreed upon, so everyone had a piece of the puzzle, but not the whole picture. Emperor Constantine called a meeting of all the bishops from all the towns in the Roman Empire, to figure out the truth. The council was held in Nicaea in the year 325, and I was there.

I was one of those who argued that Jesus was fully God *and* fully human. The angel Gabriel told Mary he would be called "God with us." So I guess that makes me a big part of why we celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. I signed my name to the Nicene Creed, the document which spells out who Jesus was and is. The Nicene Creed is still the standard for what biblical, orthodox Christians believe.

There are a lot of stories and legends about the things I did, but they're really more about what the love of God did. One of my favorite stories concerns a man who had three daughters, but not much money. In my day, when a woman got married, she had to bring money—a dowry—into the marriage, to help start a household. Without the money, she couldn't get married, she would never have children, and her father would have to support her all her life. And this guy had *three* daughters!

I heard about the situation. One night I snuck up to the man's house and tossed a bag of gold through the window, then ran off. It's a good thing the window was open at the time! That was

1 so much fun! Now one of the daughters could get married. Later,
2 I chucked another bag of gold through the window. The father
3 wanted to know where this gold was coming from, and to thank
4 his benefactor. So he stayed up all night and watched out the
5 window.

6
7 But I outsmarted him. I climbed up on the roof and dropped the
8 bag of gold down the chimney! Can you imagine a grown man
9 going up on people's houses and sending presents down the
10 chimney? You can? Well, you're probably thinking of that other
11 guy. He's made it kind of a trademark. I only did it the one time.
12 After all, I can't fly. I could have broken my neck!

13
14 There are lots of these kinds of stories. Some are true, some are
15 exaggerated, and some, well, the truth in them is that they reveal
16 my character—my generosity, my love for children and the poor,
17 and my defense of the true faith.

18
19 I died on December 6, 343. It's OK. I feel much better now.
20 Today you celebrate the day a person is born. But for Christians,
21 the day we die and enter into the presence of God, well, *that's* a
22 day to celebrate too! Sure, it's sad to say good-bye to someone
23 you love, but honestly, I've been able to do a lot more good for
24 the kingdom since I died. You should try it sometime.

25
26 Soon after I died, people came from all over to visit my tomb in
27 Myra. When they went home, they told stories about me.
28 Wherever sailors went, they talked about Saint Nicholas.

29
30 Less than a hundred years later, people started building
31 churches and naming them after me. Not just in Turkey, but also
32 in Italy, France, England, Greece, and especially Russia. Why?
33 Why are they honoring me? I guess it's because I didn't hold
34 back in my love for Jesus. That love caused me to love all
35 people, especially children, the poor, and the suffering. But all I
36 was trying to do was to be like the Lord. And you can, too.

37

A lot of people celebrate my feast day on December 6. It's a day for giving gifts, especially to children and people who are poor. In many places, people leave a stocking hanging on the mantle or a shoe outside the front door for Saint Nicholas to fill with fruit (especially oranges because they are gold), candy (like chocolate money), and other sweets. Also breads and cakes. Sometimes children leave out oats and carrots for my horse.

In the 1700s, the Dutch brought their traditions to America. In 1809 a writer named Washington Irving, who made up stories about Rip Van Winkle and a headless horseman named Ichabod Crane, depicted me as a Dutch merchant with an elfish look and a clay pipe. That wasn't me at all! But you can see where we're going with this.

In those days, the Protestants—Puritans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and others—refused to celebrate Christmas at all! December 25th turned into a night of revelry for people who weren't followers of Jesus—drinking and brawling and destroying property. Sort of like Saint Patrick's Day.

A big social change began in the 1820s, and Christmas was reconceived as a family-friendly holiday and a day to remember the poor. In England, Charles Dickens got the ball rolling with his ghost story, *A Christmas Carol*. The Ghost of Christmas Present is a kind of Father Christmas or Santa Claus figure. Again, not me.

Then Clement Moore's poem, "The Night Before Christmas," really got the Santa Claus thing going in 1823. It referred to Santa as Saint Nick. Yes, you guessed it... not me again.

The whole Santa Claus thing is not about me, and it's not about Jesus. But there's no harm in families celebrating those traditions. Just don't neglect to remember that Christmas is mostly about celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Savior of the world, God with us.

1 And *my* day? Well, that's December 6th.

2
3 If you want to remember me and honor my memory, and observe
4 December 6 as a holy day, then resolve to love God with your
5 heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as
6 yourself. Give it everything you've got. God loved the world so
7 much that he gave his only begotten Son, so whoever believes
8 in him will have eternal life. That's my holy-day wish for you.

9
10 If God loves us and gives so freely of himself, then let's show
11 our gratitude by doing the same. Give freely and joyfully. Be
12 generous with your love, your forgiveness, and the gifts and
13 resources you've been given. Remember, whenever we do
14 something for those in need, we're doing it for Jesus.

15
16 That truth gave me joy all my life. It still does, and it will forever.
17 And now that joy can be yours. Amen. (*ST. NICHOLAS exits*
18 *down the aisle, distributing more chocolates if desired.*)

THE END

Saint Valentine of Rome

February 14th; Champion of love, defender of marriage

SYNOPSIS: A defender of Christian marriage and sacrificial love, Valentine gladly faces martyrdom during the Roman persecution of the early church by Emperor Claudius “the Cruel” Gothicus.

COSTUME: A simple white robe, perhaps trimmed in red, white cincture (rope belt), sandals. Or do an Internet search for “Saint Valentine” and find inspiration from the images you find there.

SET: Writing table and stool, optional.

PROPS

- ☐ quill pen
- ☐ parchment



1 **AT START:** *SAINT VALENTINE is seated, writing with a quill pen*
2 *on parchment.*

3
4 **SAINT VALENTINE:** *(Writes as he reads his letter aloud.)*

5 “Remember, dear sister, our Lord’s commandment that we love
6 one another as he loved us. Love your enemies, too, and pray
7 for them. For even when we were still sinners, God loved us, and
8 sent his Son to die for us.” *(Looks up, sets quill pen down. To*
9 *“jailer,” who is unseen.)* Is it time? All right, then. *(Stands.)* I’m
10 ready. *(Sees audience.)* Oh, hello. *(To “jailer.”)* Before I go,
11 would it be all right if I talked to these good people first? Just to
12 say good-bye. *(Listens.)* That’s very kind. Thank you. Bless you.
13 *(To audience. Gestures OFFSTAGE.)* I have an appointment to
14 be martyred in a little while, so I won’t take too much of your
15 time.

16
17 My name is Valentine. Today is February 14, 269 AD. For the
18 moment, I’m a priest here in Rome, a servant and shepherd to
19 those who love and follow Jesus Christ. I am about to be
20 executed by order of Emperor Claudius Gothicus, also known as

Claudius II, because as everyone knows, the world can never have enough Claudiuses. I am to be dragged outside the north gate, and beaten to death with clubs and stones. Then beheaded. A triple death sentence. Talk about overkill! And why? Well, let me tell you my story and YOU can decide why I have been condemned as an intolerable threat to the vast and powerful Roman Empire.

The details of my early life aren't really important, and will most likely be lost to history anyway. What matters is that I chose to become a Christian at a time when doing so was an act of treason against the emperor, and blasphemy against the pagan pantheon of gods and goddesses. Like many tyrants, emperors want people to think they are divine, worthy of worship. But none of us is above God's law. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God, and no one, especially a politician who slaughtered his way to the top, can save our souls. There's only one savior, and his name isn't Claudius, or even the sequel, Claudius II.

Claudius Gothicus was raised to be cruel. Before he became emperor a year ago, he was a ruthless cavalry leader and general. Legend has it that he once punched a horse in the face and knocked out its teeth. For ten years or so, the Roman Empire has been under attack from the outside, and falling apart inside. The last three emperors were assassinated, and Claudius Gothicus was placed on the throne by his own army. The empire is threatened and vulnerable, and this tough-as-nails emperor has known nothing but war his whole life.

When a ruthless man who understands only violence feels threatened from within and without, he's going to act decisively and violently. His decisions are going to be short-sighted and lack wisdom. The idea of love never enters into it.

So when this new religion called Christianity started gaining followers, and all they could talk about was "love your enemies," and "pray for those who persecute you," he was understandably upset.

Let's face it. There is no place for a God of sacrificial and unconditional love in a corrupt society that is devoted to maintaining world domination through warfare, while indulging its own selfish appetites. I hope you never have to be a Christian in a world like that, but human nature being what it is, you probably do.

So I was part of this revolutionary group, who followed The Way of Christ. We met secretly, in people's homes, and even in the catacombs, a vast underground graveyard connected by miles of tunnels just outside the city.

When I was captured, I was accused of disrespecting two Roman practices. One was very ancient, and the other was one of Claudius II's own innovations. What it really comes down to is that I was a champion for traditional Christian marriage, and if that's what I'm to die defending, then so be it.

First, there is this pagan festival called Lupercalia. It's always been held in the middle of February. It's a fertility ritual that is supposed to bring about spring from the winter. It used to be called Februa, which is where the month of February got its name. Anyway, during this festival, young men would draw the names of young women in a lottery, and they would party like crazy people struck by Cupid's arrow. They'd live as husband and wife for a year. Then the next February, they'd pair up with someone else.

Well, obviously, that's not wholesome behavior for Christians, so I encouraged the faithful not to participate. But to the empire, I was endangering the whole order of nature as they saw it. The idea of one man married to one woman for life was foreign to them. They just didn't get it. And the Romans didn't like being told that the way they've been doing things for hundreds of years was wrong. They blamed Christians for taking all the fun out of life, but what we really wanted was to get away from selfishness and sin. Which, when you think about it, really aren't all that

1 much fun after a while, anyway. At least not for those who have
2 their eyes on heaven.

3
4 But the last straw was when I defied a decree from Claudius II
5 himself. Did I mention that another one of his nicknames was
6 “Claudius the Cruel”? Yeah. Imagine putting *that* on a name tag
7 at a family reunion! Because he was waging so many wars, in
8 so many directions, his army was under tremendous strain. He
9 needed soldiers. But he was having trouble getting volunteers.
10 Claudius got it into his head that men weren’t willing to join the
11 army because they were too attached to their wives and families.
12 His solution? Ban all engagements and weddings in Rome.
13 That’s right. He canceled marriage.

14
15 Why is it that people think they can change marriage into
16 whatever they want it to be, or do away with it altogether? The
17 covenantal marriage of one man and one woman is ordained by
18 God. It’s part of His plan. And people think they know better and
19 can improve on that? I don’t think so. So as a priest, I felt it was
20 my duty to defy that ungodly decree, and began marrying
21 Christian couples in secret.

22
23 Well, obviously, it didn’t stay a secret very long. I was arrested
24 and put under house arrest in the home of a judge named
25 Asterius. “Home” is kind of a misnomer. He had many Christians
26 in chains on his property. It was a kind of “privatized” prison, you
27 might say. I had many conversations with the judge Asterius.
28 Finally, he decided to put my faith to the test. He introduced me
29 to his daughter, who was born blind, and challenged me to pray
30 to my God that she might be healed. I prayed to the One who
31 gives sight to the blind, makes the lame to walk, and sets the
32 captives free. The Good Lord heard my prayer, and cured her!
33 Judge Asterius was convicted and converted on the spot. He
34 broke all the idols in his house, fasted for three days, and
35 allowed me to baptize him and his entire household, a total of
36 forty-four people. Then he released all his Christian prisoners.

1 Now I know that some of you, like me, are called to a single life.
2 And even though I'm going to end up dying in defense of
3 Christian marriage, I know that the Lord, who also did not marry,
4 has a special plan and place for us. The Apostle Paul, who also
5 never married, felt that singleness made him all the more
6 available to serve Christ and God's people. The Lord has even
7 revealed to me that one saint, Agnes of Rome, will be martyred
8 in 303 AD, just thirty-three years after my death today,
9 specifically for defending the unmarried life! Sometimes you just
10 can't win with this crazy Roman Empire. But married or single,
11 we are all precious in God's eyes.

12
13 Despite all the threats and arrests, I just couldn't stop marrying
14 Christian couples who loved each other and wanted their
15 marriage blessed by God. I was arrested again and brought
16 before Claudius Gothicus himself. Whether it was holy boldness
17 or stupidity, I'm not sure, but I took the opportunity to tell
18 Claudius the Cruel about the love of Jesus, and how he wants
19 us to love one another. And to stop tinkering with marriage. The
20 Emperor of Rome flew into a rage and sentenced me to triple
21 death.

22
23 So, here I am. But not for long. Since I was locked up, I've been
24 sending notes to everyone I can. And I encourage them to send
25 notes to others. I remind them to keep faith, hope and love alive.
26 And especially the greatest of these, love. The Lord said that
27 there is no greater love a person can have than to lay down his
28 life for his friends. Jesus set the example. And soon, I'm going
29 to follow in His footsteps. I don't feel worthy. What did I ever do,
30 except encourage and bless true love?

31
32 But don't feel sorry for me. Pity poor Claudius. The Lord has
33 shown me that within the year, he will be taken by the plague.
34 Even the mighty must fall, and who is there to catch him?

35
36 If I could leave you with one thing, it would be this: God is love,
37 we are created in His image, and He wants us to love the way
38 He does. Generously. Unselfishly. Always, no matter what. And

1 Christian marriage is His best way of teaching us how to do that.
2 Also, it doesn't hurt to give your true love a note or card, maybe
3 something sweet to eat, and perhaps flowers...just because.
4
5 *(Looks to unseen JAILER.)* It's time? All right. *(Remembers.)* Oh!
6 I forgot to sign my last letter. *(Goes to table, writes.)* "And never
7 forget, dear sister, the words of our Lord, who said that the way
8 everyone will know we are his disciples, is if we have love for
9 one another. From, your Valentine."

THE END

Saint Patrick of Ireland

March 17th; Apostle of Ireland, miracle worker, spiritual warrior

SYNOPSIS: An immature teenager becomes a slave, escapes captivity, learns to love his enemies, and answers God's call to return to the dreaded Emerald Isle. He dedicates his new life to preaching the Good News, engages in spiritual warfare, baptizes tens of thousands, and plants hundreds of churches.

COSTUMES: A simple white robe, perhaps trimmed in green, heavy hiking boots. Or do an Internet search for "Saint Patrick" and find inspiration from the images you find there.

PROPS

- A large walking stick or staff.



1 **SAINT PATRICK:** They say that on March 17, everyone is Irish.
2 I'm Saint Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, and sure and begorrah, I'm
3 not the least bit Irish, not even one wee little bit. God knows I
4 love 'em, though. Every single blessed one. Back in my day, in
5 the fourth century AD, the fighting Irish took a lot of getting used
6 to. The Good Book says that even when we were still sinners,
7 God loved us and sent his Son to save us. That's how God loves
8 the Irish, and that's how the Good Lord taught me to love them,
9 too.

10
11 But not right away.

12
13 I was born in Roman Brittania in 387 AD, into a good Christian
14 family. My father Calpurnius was a deacon in the church, but I
15 was no saint, believe me. Sure, I was a wayward youth—a
16 rabble-rouser and hooligan who was fascinated by the pagan
17 rituals unbelievers performed in the forests. Ask any hot-blooded
18 fourteen-year-old boy if he'd rather sit and listen to a long, boring

1 service—in Latin, no less—or dance with a wild-haired, barefoot
2 girl around a bonfire. That's right. Me too.

3
4 So there I was out in the woods, far from the safe embrace of
5 my family and church, when I was kidnapped by Irish pirates and
6 spirited across the sea to be sold as a slave in ferocious,
7 untamed Ireland.

8
9 For six years I wore the iron collar of a slave, tending the sheep,
10 goats, and swine of my masters. I was lonely near to madness
11 out in the fields, with no one to talk to but God himself in heaven.
12 I prayed a hundred prayers a day, and a hundred more at night,
13 and truth be told, the Lord sent me comfort, whether in the wood
14 or on a mountain, and I suffered no hurt from the snow or ice or
15 rain. He forgave my sins and had mercy on my youth and
16 ignorance, and that is how I became a proper Christian. I learned
17 the language of the Irish, and the ways of their villages and
18 chieftains. But they were not my people. And oh, how I longed
19 to go home.

20
21 The Irish are famous for being the most homesick people on
22 earth, and I can surely relate.

23
24 One night God visited me in a dream and told me to run away to
25 the coast, that a ship and sailors were waiting to take me home.
26 I fled, sojourning two hundred miles through the wilderness of
27 Eire, a land of wolves and wild men, until I came to a port and
28 convinced the captain he would be rewarded if he returned me
29 to Britain. We sailed for three days and nights, and along the
30 way, I convinced all the sailors to put their trust in God. Soon I
31 was home and restored to my family. Oh, what a reunion it was!

32
33 My parents were glad that I returned, and they were gratified to
34 learn that I had become a true Christian. I studied everything I
35 could find about the faith. Then one night I had a dream or vision.
36 Whatever it was, it was a calling from God himself, and that's no
37 blarney. I saw a man coming from the dreaded island of my
38 captivity, carrying many letters. He gave me one to read, and it

1 said, "The voice of the Irish." When I opened the scroll, I heard
2 a multitude of voices calling out to me, "Holy servant boy, come
3 and walk among us."

4
5 From that moment on, I began studying for the priesthood.
6 Though I wasn't a very good student, eventually I was ordained
7 a priest. Two years later, and barely scraping by in seminary, I
8 was made a missionary bishop. My vocation was to take the
9 gospel to Ireland.

10
11 I arrived back on the Emerald Isle on March 25, 433, at what is
12 now County Wicklow, the very place where I had escaped the
13 dreary life of a captive and a slave. Now returned as the God-
14 sent deliverer of the Irish people, I met with the chieftain of one
15 of the Druid tribes. He didn't exactly welcome me with open
16 arms. In fact, he tried to kill me. That happened quite a lot,
17 actually. But in my very first missionary attempt, God intervened
18 and worked a miracle. The chieftain converted to Christianity,
19 and his whole village with him. Thus began my apostolic
20 ministry.

21
22 That was pretty much the long and the short of it—the full extent
23 of my missionary strategy. It worked amazingly well.

24
25 Across the length and breadth of Ireland, I met with the village
26 chieftains, and confronted the Druid priests, like Moses against
27 the magicians of Egypt. Many enemies of God wanted me dead.
28 But their ambushes and attacks always failed. My ministry was
29 filled with miracles of protection, of intervention, of mercy and
30 healing. The chieftains saw that God's power was more powerful
31 than that of their pagan gods, and they wanted to join the winning
32 team. And whatever faith the chieftain had, his people joined in,
33 or else. Sure, some of the conversions were a bit shaky, but I
34 always made sure they were properly baptized and rooted in a
35 solid foundation of biblical truth before moving on to the next
36 village.

1 And now, a word about the snakes. Everyone loves to hear
2 about Saint Patrick driving the snakes from Ireland. And sure,
3 you scientific types are quick to point out that post-glacial Ireland
4 never had snakes. They can't swim across the open ocean, even
5 the twelve miles between Ireland and Scotland. There never
6 were any snakes. Point taken.

7
8 And so I suppose you think that means you scoffers can
9 disregard everything else I did: one hundred thousand Irish souls
10 converted and baptized into Christianity, plus more than three
11 hundred churches planted, along with the testimony of many
12 miracles. That's neither fair nor charitable, wouldn't you agree?

13
14 There's more to the legend of the snakes that I'm guessing you
15 never heard. What's another word for snake, but serpent? And
16 if you know your Bible, then you understand the serpent in the
17 Garden of Eden was the devil himself.

18
19 In Ireland there is a mountain now called Croagh Patrick, the
20 "Mount Sinai of Ireland," but before that it was Croghan Aigle, or
21 Eagle's Peak. Seven hundred fifty-three meters high, and it was
22 the devil's stronghold in Ireland. With several of my monks, I
23 went to the foot of that mountain and fasted for forty days.

24
25 Then, alone but bolstered by the prayers of my brothers and the
26 grace of God, I climbed that mountain and did battle with the
27 pagan gods and demons laying claim to the land. It was a fierce
28 and fearsome battle: spiritual warfare for nothing less than the
29 soul of Ireland and its people. But through prayer, the almighty
30 power of God, and my sheer stubbornness, the good prevailed.

31
32 Yes, I drove those demons, those serpents, those snakes from
33 the land of Eire. Then I offered the Lord's Supper on top of that
34 mountain, and it is a place of spiritual pilgrimage to this very day.
35 So don't talk to me about adders and asps and other scaly
36 beasts. I fought the good fight against a brood of demonic vipers
37 and lived to tell about it.

1 As for the shamrock and using it to teach the doctrine of the holy
2 Trinity, I have to confess that the whole idea befuddles me. I
3 know it's true, but I was never that bright a student of theology.
4 Truth be told, I don't think anyone can adequately explain the
5 Trinity. It's too much for our puny brains, so I take it on faith as
6 a revealed truth.

7
8 Still, there are plenty of shamrocks underfoot in Ireland, and the
9 pagan Irish had their fair share of triplicate pagan deities, so the
10 little flowers with one stem and three leaves proved useful when
11 proclaiming the one true God in three persons. I must confess,
12 though, it got a bit old after a while. Everywhere I went people
13 would say, "Tell us about the Trinity, Patrick. Here's a shamrock,
14 Patrick. Do it again, Patrick."

15
16 Personally, I'd rather be remembered not as the "shamrock
17 saint," but as a man who loved his enemies and boldly spread
18 the Good News of Jesus Christ to a people who knew him not,
19 nor his ways.

20
21 And so, through forty years of evangelism, entire kingdoms
22 bowed down before the Lord God almighty. I baptized tens of
23 thousands of people, planted churches, and raised up monks
24 and nuns, priests and missionaries. For the rest of my days I
25 traveled all over Ireland, spreading the Good News.

26
27 Of course I didn't do any of this alone. The Lord raised up a host
28 of Irish saints who carried on the work throughout Ireland and
29 beyond, especially Brendan, Columba, Kevin, and Brigid.

30
31 I'm here to tell you that a man can't walk with a lost people,
32 deliver and heal them day and night, and face untold terrors for
33 their sake without falling in love with them. I know that our Father
34 in heaven loves us with a burning desire for reconciliation and
35 restoration to himself. But I also can't help but think that when
36 the Lord Jesus walked the earth and experienced what it's really
37 like to be one of us, that somehow he fell in love with us just a

1 wee bit more. The squalor, the suffering, the sin... it made him
2 weep. I have shed those same tears myself for the Irish.

3
4 How can I ever thank Jesus enough for sharing just a portion of
5 his love for the lost with me? Sure, I was a captive and a slave,
6 and I was treated most cruelly. But I am here to tell you that it is
7 indeed possible to love your enemies. It made my heart glad to
8 see some of them eventually love me back, and love God all the
9 more.

10
11 As I said, I'm not Irish. Not even a little bit. But then again, maybe
12 I'm guilty of just a wee bit of blarney in saying so. If the Irish
13 people choose to claim me as their own, who am I to argue?
14 They called out, God heard them, he sent me, and I obeyed.
15 What had originally been intended for evil, God used for good. I
16 am theirs and they are mine, and we are all the Lord's.

17
18 All my life I was a man of action. I never amounted to much as a
19 scholar or writer. The short book I call my Confession tells the
20 story simply enough. But my best work, practiced again and
21 again under the stars of heaven in my years as a slave, was a
22 poem and a prayer I called the "Breastplate." It's a prayer of
23 devotion, of protection against the attacks of the enemy, of faith
24 and trust that the Lord is with me, always. Here's a bit of it:

25
26 Christ be with me, Christ within me
27 Christ behind me, Christ before me
28 Christ beside me, Christ to win me
29 Christ to comfort me and restore me.
30 Christ beneath me, Christ above me
31 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger
32 Christ in hearts of all that love me
33 Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

1 If I am to be remembered, I would hope that people would picture
2 a humble, pious, bold and brazen man who loved his enemies
3 and trusted in God. One thing I learned—and it was a hard
4 lesson indeed—is that if you want to convert someone, you have
5 to love them first. It's how the Lord saved me, and how he wants
6 us to reach others, even if they persecute us. Trust in God, and
7 he'll never let you down.

8
9 Of course, it also helps to have just a wee bit of the luck of the
10 Irish.

THE END

Saint Francis of Assisi

October 4th

SYNOPSIS: Nature lover and friend to animals, Francis abandons wealth, comfort and worldly glory for a life of holy poverty, simplicity, brotherhood and evangelism, inadvertently creating the religious order of Franciscans and inventing the Nativity play.

THEMES: Holy poverty, creation, animals

COSTUME: A ragged brown tunic with monk's cowl/hood, bare feet. Optional: small stuffed bird perched on shoulder.

PROPS

- ☐ A Nativity set



SAINT FRANCIS: Chances are, if you see a figure standing in someone's vegetable patch or flower bed, it's either a statue of me or maybe a garden gnome. Or both. I'm the one who's bald on top. Garden gnomes have pointy red hats.

People call me Francis of Assisi, a humble beggar, friend and brother to all of God's magnificent creation, and especially the patron saint of animals.

Actually, my name isn't really Francis. When I was born in 1181 A.D. in Assisi, a town in the Italian state of Umbria, my father, a wealthy silk merchant, was away on business. My mother, a devout Christian, named me Giovanni, after John the Baptist. But when my dad, who was fascinated by anything having to do with France, got home, he was furious with my biblical-sounding name. He changed it to Francesco—which translates to "Frenchie."

That was just the first sign that my father and mother had different ideas about what to do with me, and I was caught right



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