

Mowhen Soke—Patrick of Ireland

*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;
reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*

2 Timothy 4:2

Interview can be used for St. Patrick's Day (March 17)
(Elementary to high school teaching level)

Background Information

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Each year on March 17 in Ireland and now in many other countries, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated with parades, feasts, the "wearing o' the green", shamrocks, corn beef and cabbage, and even little green leprachauns. What do these customs have to do with Patrick? Because Patrick died on March 17, 461, Irish Catholics marked this day as a holy day to remember their patron saint and all he did for Ireland. Irish immigrants to America brought their customs of feasts, parades, and wearing green on March 17th to honor Patrick and Ireland, the Emerald Isle. They wore green shamrocks like Patrick used in his sermons. As early as 1737 the American Irish first celebrated in Boston with a parade sponsored by the Charitable Irish Society. Sadly, the actual history of the Welsh-born boy and his enormous work for God in Ireland is hardly mentioned on this day. You can change that!

Props

- A picture of St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland
- A shepherd's staff
- A large rock
- A large green shamrock made from shiny green cardboard
- A bishop's robe (chasuble), a stole decorated with crosses if possible, and a miter hat

Characters and Costumes

- **Interviewer** in modern clothes
- **Mowhen Soke* (Patrick)** in a light-colored tunic and long pants of Roman times

Blocking

Have a small table for props center stage alongside Patrick and the Interviewer. The shepherd's staff is beside the table. On the table place the picture of Patrick driving out the snakes from Ireland, a large rock, the large green shamrock, and the complete bishop's costume.

* Some historians spell St. Patrick's birth name "Maewyn Succat"

Interview of Mowhen Soke

- Interviewer:** Hello! Thank you for taking the time to chat with me and this group of distinguished Christians. We are looking forward to being inspired by your fascinating story.
- Mowhen:** My name is Mowhen Soke. I was born about A.D. 389 in the British Isles in the area today known as Wales, part of the Roman Empire at that time. Most original records were destroyed when the Roman armies came and ransacked the British Isles. Consequently, little is known about me and the history of my country at that time. My father's name was Calpornius; he was a deacon in the church. My grandfather was a pastor in the Celtic church.
- Interviewer:** Please tell us a little about the history of the British Isles, which includes Ireland, England, Scotland, and your country, Wales.
- Mowhen:** The people who were living in my country at the time I was born were known as the Celts. Historians believe that Christians from Galatia (from where we get the book of Galatians) came as missionaries to the British Isles and brought the gospel to the Celts. The Celts had been a very pagan people. Their priests were called druids, who practiced many devilish or occultic rituals. They had a holiday which was known as Samhain, which means "lord or god of the dead"—this holiday was a festival of death.
- Interviewer:** I hate to say it, but we have a modern-day version of that festival of death. We have changed the name to Halloween.
- Mowhen:** I'm very sorry to hear that. Now my story continues: when the gospel of Jesus was brought to the British Isles, it produced a significant change. Whole towns were converted to Christianity! Government leaders used the Ten Commandments as the basis for their laws! However, not everyone was converted, so some towns were still controlled by the pagan druid priests. Someone discovered a Celtic law book, written in Latin, that uses the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments as the basis for laws. Celtic churches had Christian schools attached to them, where children were taught God's ways. These were called catechumen schools because this is where children learned the catechism.
- Interviewer:** Christian schools have been around for a long time!
- Mowhen:** True indeed! There were several things missing in the theology of this early Celtic church. First, they did not grasp the idea of the Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one Godhead. Secondly, Christians had God's law and the Ten Commandments, but they did not really understand that the Holy Spirit could reside in them and give them power to live a holy life.
- Interviewer:** I would like to know more about you personally.
- Mowhen:** When I was about 15 years old, and living in Wales, I committed a serious sin. It really shocked me that I could do something so evil, and I realized that there was something wrong with me. I guess you could say that I now began to think about the sinful nature of man. Then something happened that would forever change my life. A large group of evil men, an army, came from Ireland into my town and captured many of the young men and women, and carried them away. I was one of their prisoners! We were taken to an island country called Ireland to be sold as slaves.

Interviewer: You wrote about this in your diary, the *Confesso*.

Mowhen: That's correct. Here is what I wrote: "I am . . . a sinner, most unlearned, the least of all the faithful, and utterly despised by many. My father was Calpornius, a deacon, son of Potitus, a priest, of the village Bannavem Taburniæ; he had a country seat nearby, and there I was taken captive. I was then about sixteen years of age. I did not know the true God. I was taken into captivity to Ireland with many thousands of people—and deservedly so, because we turned away from God, and did not keep His commandments, and did not obey our priests, who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought over us the wrath of His anger and scattered us among many nations, even unto the utmost part of the earth, where now my littleness is placed among strangers."

Interviewer: What happened to you in Ireland? Were you killed?

Mowhen: No, I was not killed, and actually God used this experience for good, because this is where I realized my need for Him! As a slave, I was made a keeper of sheep (*Pick up the shepherd's staff*) and spent many long hours each day in the mountain fields watching over my herd of sheep as they grazed. One day in my lonely exile on the mountain, my heart began to soften and I began to seek God. I asked God to reveal Himself to me. This is what I wrote about this experience: "And there the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief that I might at last remember my sins and be converted with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had mercy on my youth and ignorance, and watched over me before I knew Him, and before I was able to distinguish between good and evil, and guarded me, and comforted me as would a father his son. Many times a day I prayed—the love of God and His fear came to me more and more, and my faith was strengthened. And my spirit was moved so that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and almost as many in the night, and this even when I was staying in the woods and on the mountains; and I used to get up for prayer before daylight, through snow, through frost, through rain, and I felt no harm, and there was no sloth in me—as I now see, because the spirit within me was then fervent."

Interviewer: Wow, so no person led you to the Lord; God just spoke to you and you began to seek Him?

Mowhen: Yes, and after I was born again I changed my name! No longer was I going to be Mowhen, I was going to have a Christian name, Patrick, meaning noble, because God was a noble God and He was making me into His image.

Interviewer: How do you think God providentially prepared you for this time in your life?

Patrick: Well, one thing about my upbringing really helped me during this time of slavery. I gained favor with my owner, and survived because I had learned the character trait of obedience. You see, my father had trained me to obey those in authority over me. I did not argue or delay when told to do something. I did not make excuses, but immediately did what my master commanded me.

Interviewer: That is a lesson that all boys and girls (and adults) of today should learn.

Patrick: Well said! To continue my story, amazingly my owner became a Christian; he repented for making me his slave and said I was free to go! Praise God! God spoke to me in a dream and told me how to get back to my homeland. Here is what I wrote: "And there one night I heard in my sleep a voice saying to me: 'It is well that you fast, soon you will go to your own country.' And again, after a short while, I heard a voice saying to me: 'See, your ship is ready.' And it was not near, but at a distance of perhaps two hundred miles, and I had never been there, nor did I know a living soul there; and then I took to flight, and I left the man with whom I had stayed for six years. And I went in the strength of God who directed my way to my good, and I feared nothing until I came to that ship."

And so with God's help I found this ship and finally returned to my home. What a happy young man I was!

Interviewer: Well I guess that is the end of the story; you lived happily ever after, right?

Patrick: No, this was not the end, there was so much more that God did in my life! Believe it or not, God called me to be a missionary, and guess where He wanted me to go?

Interviewer: Africa?

Patrick: Let me read what I wrote down: "And again after a few years I was in Britain with my people, who received me as their son, and sincerely besought me that now at last, having suffered so many hardships, I should not leave them and go elsewhere. And there I saw in the night the vision of a man, whose name was Victorinus, coming as it were from Ireland, with countless letters. And he gave me one of them, and I read the opening words of the letter, which were, 'The voice of the Irish'; and as I read the beginning of the letter I thought that at the same moment I heard their voice—they were those beside the Wood of Voclut, which is near the Western Sea—and thus did they cry out as with one mouth: 'We ask thee, boy, come and walk among us once more.'"

Interviewer: I'm not sure I understand.

Patrick: God gave me a vision or a dream (I am not sure which) where a man appeared to me and said come over to Ireland to live there. I knew that this was so I could bring the Gospel to that nation.

Interviewer: Amazing! So God called you to go back to the land where you were a slave, the land that you just escaped from?

Patrick: Yes, and as you can imagine, at first I did not want to do it. But I finally yielded to God's will, as I know that He is perfect, and everything He calls you to do is the right thing to do. The first thing that I realized was that if I was going to preach and teach the Bible accurately, I needed serious training. So I spent almost twelve years studying with St. Germain. I knew the power of the occultic druid priests and I knew that only through the power of God and His Word could they be overcome.

Interviewer: What was in your heart to say to the people of Ireland?

Patrick: I had two main passions. First, I wanted to bring to them the knowledge of the Trinity. I wanted them to understand that the Godhead consisted of one God in three persons. I wanted them to understand that they could have a relationship with the Father, through Jesus the Son. Secondly, I wanted them to know that they could have the power of the Holy Spirit residing in them, leading them into all truth and giving them power and victory over sin. It was not through human efforts that the powers of darkness in their land would be overcome, but by the incredible power of God.

Interviewer: So, did you send out letters of support asking people to finance your mission trip to Ireland?

Patrick: I've never heard of doing such a thing! I left my home once again and arrived in Ireland, the land of my captivity, at the age of 35 in the year 432 and was a priest to the people.
(*Put on robe over the Roman tunic, and pick up the shepherd's staff.*)
Ireland at this time was still filled with paganism. The people did not know the true God, so they worshipped the sun, the moon, wind, fire and even this. . . . (*Hold out the rock*)

Interviewer: Is that what I think it is?

Patrick: Yes, it's just a plain old rock! The druids had taught the people that good and evil spirits lived in the trees and hills. The druids performed magic and sacrifice, even human sacrifice. It was abominable! I had a lot of work to do! God blessed my ministry and did many great things, including bringing salvation and healings. I could tell you many stories if you had time.

Interviewer: I'm sure we have time for at least one. Now I'm hoping that those evil druids just all gave up their pagan practices and converted to Christianity as soon as you arrived and told them about Jesus.

Patrick: Of course not. The Bible says, in Mark 3:27, that you cannot come in and steal from a house until you have overcome the man of the house who protects it. Well in this case the house was Ireland and the man who was in charge was the devil. The devil was not about to let go of his hold on Ireland without a fight!

Interviewer: So you fought the devil?

Patrick: You bet I did! Here's one example. One year, Easter Sunday coincided with a pagan holiday of the druids. The High King Loaghaire had made a law that the first fire lit on this holiday had to be a fire dedicated to one of their pagan gods. I had an idea. The Scriptures have a lot to say about God as the Light of the World, and it says that He is a consuming fire. So I decided to light the fire of God first, to remind others of these truths. I lit my fire on the hill of Slane, opposite the hill of Tara, where the king would light his.

Interviewer: You didn't defy the law, did you?

Patrick: Yes, I did. I got up early that resurrection morning and built a fire on the hill and proclaimed that this was the fire of the resurrection of Christ, and that the nation of Ireland must no longer be pagan, but Christian! When the druids saw my fire burning first, they were hopping mad! They immediately told the High King of Ireland, Loaghaire, what had happened and complained that if he did not extinguish my fire, it would blaze the light of Christ across Ireland forever!

Interviewer: Usually anyone who disobeys a king's order ends up in big trouble.

Patrick: I received an invitation to go see the king. I took some of my fellow preachers and we began walking to his palace. We did not know it, but the king had told his soldiers to ambush us and kill all of us. Providentially, God sent a cloud that enveloped us, and the soldiers never saw us! This is the prayer that I prayed as I traveled:

*Christ be with me
Christ be before me
Christ be behind me
Christ be within me
Christ be beneath me
Christ be above me
Christ be at my right
Christ be at my left
Christ be in the fort
Christ be in the chariot seat
Christ be in the ship
Christ be in the heart of everyone who thinks of me*

*Christ be in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
 Christ be in every eye that sees me
 Christ be in every ear that hears me*

- Interviewer:** Wow, I guess the king was really surprised when you showed up.
- Patrick:** He sure was! Miraculously, he allowed me to tell him the good news of Jesus, and from this point Ireland began to turn away from darkness and evil to the Lord of light and love.
- Interviewer:** Amazing, praise God! Now, I have read that God really blessed your ministry. You led over 100,000 men and women to faith in Christ, and you personally started 200–300 churches. You started schools and at least one college. You also applied God’s Word to the government so that Ireland would be ruled by godly laws.
- Patrick:** These things are true, done by the strength of God. People tried to give me gifts, but I refused them. I believed that poverty and misfortune were better for me than riches and pleasures. People tried to honor me as well, but I wanted the entire honor to go to my Lord Jesus. I would have been glad to have been martyred for the sake of Christ.
- Interviewer:** This is how all Christians should think. Can you tell us about the three leaf clover, that the Irish call the Shamrock?
- Patrick:** Of course. You can use the three leaf clover (*Hold up the large green shamrock*) to help people understand the concept of the Trinity. It has one leaf, with one stem, but it has three parts. This is similar to the Godhead—one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The plant is green, symbolizing growth. God causes us to grow in Him, as He teaches us and we obey.
- Interviewer:** It’s great that God gives His people analogies that they can use to teach His truths. It’s sad today that so many people think about Patrick’s Day as only relating to “the luck of the Irish,” the shamrock, the color green and big parades.
- Patrick:** Truly that is sad; the truth and the power of God have been turned into traditions of men and ungodly ideas such as “luck,” with no knowledge of the true God that I so diligently and lovingly served in Ireland.
- Interviewer:** But now when we see a shamrock, we can share God’s truth about the Trinity, as you did so long ago! One more thing: there are some artists that have painted you driving out the snakes from Ireland. (*Hold up the picture.*) Tell us about that.
- Patrick:** Well, actually, Ireland did not have any snakes to begin with! But I think what the artists might have meant was that God used me to drive paganism and its devilish practices out of Ireland.
- Interviewer:** So, how does your story end?
- Patrick:** Very happily! In A.D. 461 God took me home to be with Him forever. It doesn’t get any better than that!
- Interviewer:** And what about the nation that you gave your life for?
- Patrick:** At the time of my death, Ireland was known as a Christian nation!

- Interviewer:** What a testimony! Do you have any concluding thoughts?
- Patrick:** About 200 years after I died, the Roman Catholic Church claimed me as one of their own and declared that I was a saint (*Put on the stole and the miter hat*); thus many people today refer to me as Saint Patrick. The truth is, I am not Roman Catholic at all, and the Bible says that all believers are saints. So you can just call me Patrick.
- Interviewer:** Thanks for that clarification. Any other final words of encouragement?
- Patrick:** Just one. God tells all of us to preach and teach the good news. Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- Interviewer:** The Great Commission!
- Patrick:** Yes, so all of you need to be missionaries, like I was. Live the Christian life so that when you tell people the Gospel they will believe you, because they have seen Christ in your life and character. Preach the Gospel to all those God puts in your life: your relatives, your neighbors, your friends, your classmates, and those in other countries, if God calls you there.
- Interviewer:** Everyone here helps fulfill the Great Commission as they teach the next generation to observe all of the commands of Christ.
- Patrick:** The neat ending to my story is that the Irish themselves became missionaries. The Irish believers developed a passion for foreign missions. They burned with a love for Christ and they went everywhere with the Gospel, including Britain, central Europe, and as far north as Iceland.
- Interviewer:** That's incredible—God touches your life and blesses you, and you want others to experience His love and blessings, too.

The Truth About Patrick
by Linda Louise Johnson

*Patrick at sixteen years
taken far away from home
a captive slave, still a boy
on a hillside all alone.*

*Under foreign skies
the shepherd called to God
Speak oh Lord and tell me
why I'm bound to Irish sod.*

*A hundred prayers he prayed by day
at night almost the same
called to prayer in ice and snow
and baptized in the rain.*

*Listening for the still small voice
from heaven's holy heights,
longing just to know the One
who hung stars in the night.*

*Through six long years the slave
breathed in revelation
alone with God below the sky
certain of salvation.*

*Then he was free, escaped to home
learning more of Christ, the Truth and Way.
A changed man now, humble, kind,
wanting only to obey.*

*When in a dream the angel came
and called him back to Ireland,
so he brought the Word of Christ
and forever changed the land.*

*In the countryside and villages
before the great cathedrals soared
Saint Patrick spoke the truths of God
and souls came to the Lord.*

*He set a fire of love and truth
and it's blazing still
in Irish hearts who come to know
what he learned on Irish hills.*

*And so if you are in Ireland
and you're under starry skies
look up and pray as Patrick did
until the voice of God draws nigh.*

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