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TOM MALONE

St Patrick's Day

St Patricks' Day has been celebrated in a variety of ways for a thousand years or more...

The ninth century **Book of Armagh** directed all *monasteries* and *churches* in Ireland to celebrate Patrick's death in **mid-spring** with **three** days and nights of **feasting**.

In 1631 he was declared a
Catholic saint by the Vatican.

For two centuries or more, street parades
have been central to **St Patrick's Day** observance
in Ireland and, even more so, in those parts of the world touched
by the *Irish diaspora*.

In North America especially,
St Patrick's Day street parades quickly
became an **important annual expression**
of Irish immigrant *society and*
culture.

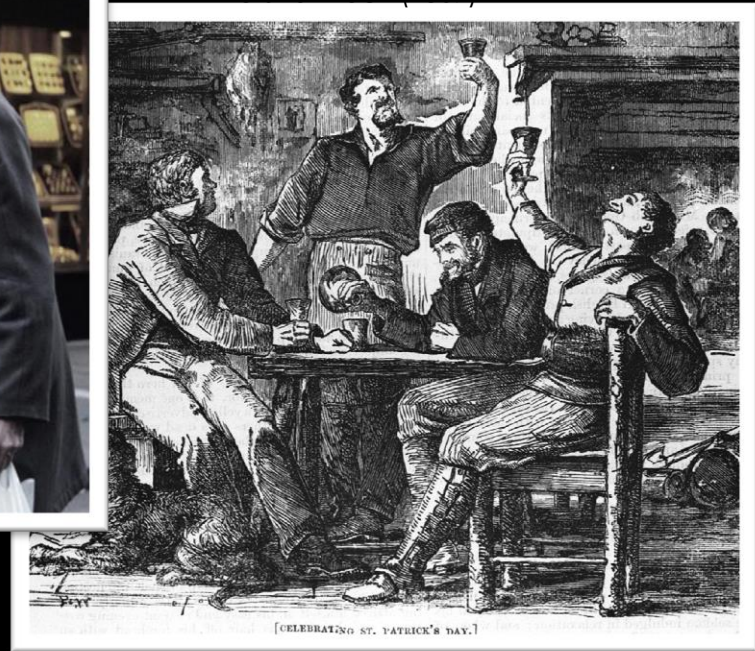


In Irish folk tradition the saint is sometimes portrayed as a *mythical figure* who combats the pagan god **Crom Dubh**, and a large number of other legends are told about him.

The concept of the patron saint **banishing snakes** from Ireland is, however, a **motif** borrowed from *French tradition* of the twelfth-century saint **Honoratus of Lérins** –

the *absence of snakes* from Ireland's fauna has been noted by the **Graeco-Roman** writer Solinus some *200 years before* Patrick's arrival in Ireland.

Traditionally, **CROSSES** of various kinds were worn on the saint's feast day, while the earliest report of the wearing of a **sprig of shamrock** dates from the **early 1700s**.



The custom of **'drowning the shamrock'** on the **feast day** of the saint appears to arise from the custom of placing sprigs of the plant in a **glass** when **toasting** the saint.

‘It is customary for the people to wear a bunch of shamrock in their coats in *honour of St Patrick*. Shamrocks are sent to the members of the family who are in **exile**. In the evening it is customary for the old men of the district to go to the town for a **wee drop**’

~ *Carndonagh, Donegal*
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'I always wore a **St Patrick's Cross** on the **17th of March**. It is made from a piece of **cardboard**, round in shape covered with **green paper**. A piece of **shamrock** was put in the **centre**. I wore it on my left **shoulder**. All the **children** around the **place** were comparing the **Patrick's Cross** to see whose was the **nicest**.'

~ *Ballyadams, Laois*

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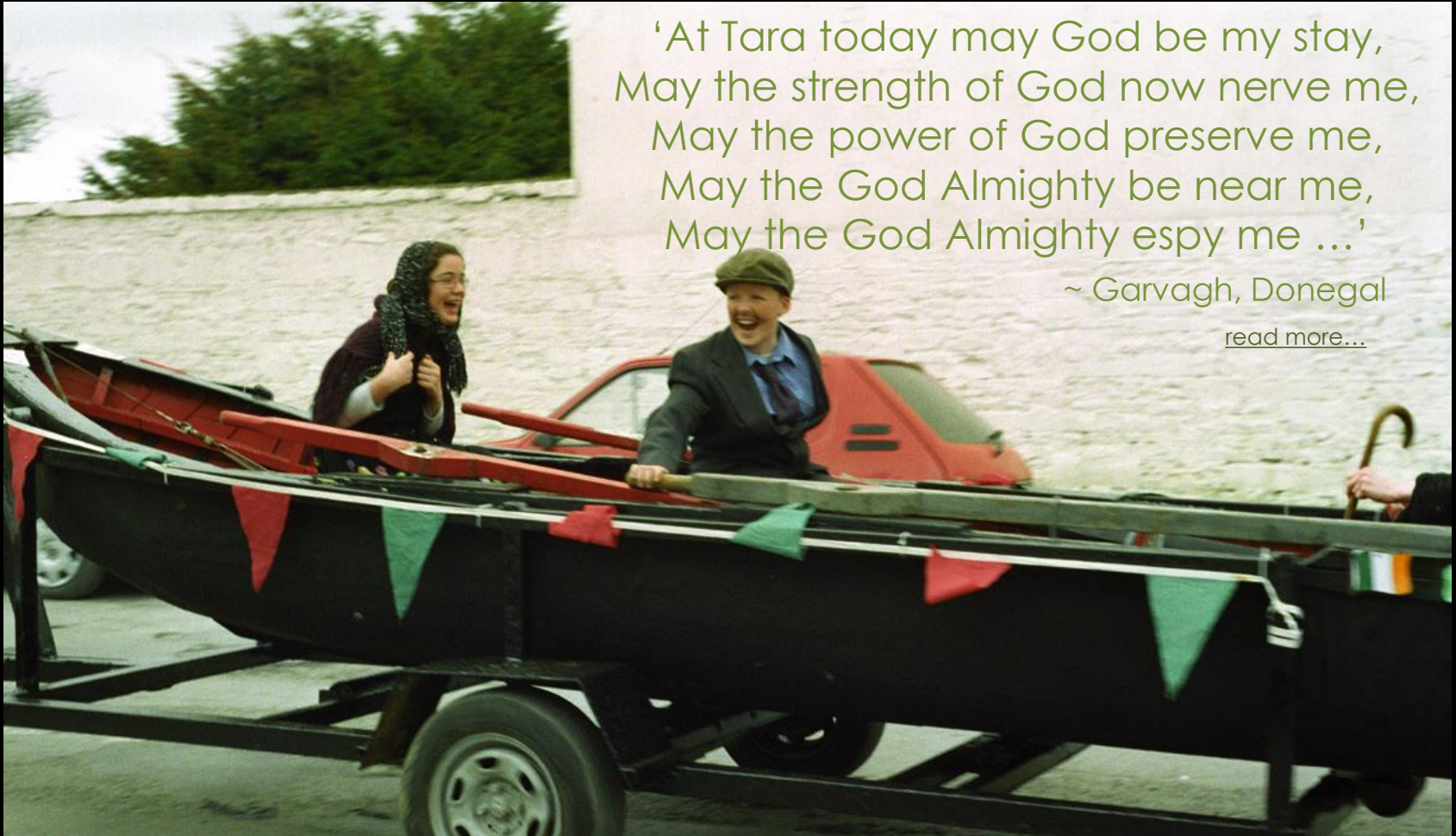
St Patrick's Prayer at Tara



'At Tara today may God be my stay,
May the strength of God now nerve me,
May the power of God preserve me,
May the God Almighty be near me,
May the God Almighty espy me ...'

~ Garvagh, Donegal

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Curses of St Patrick

‘That your house may be built on a height’

‘That your COWS may be white’

‘That your wife may be handsome’

~ Cregduff, Mayo

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