

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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THE JOE-PADDY FESTIVAL

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to visit a friend of mine who was studying for the priesthood at Saint Vincent de Paul Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida. It was late in February and the weather was beautiful, in the mid-seventies, the weather most of us are pining for after the current week of Nor'Easter's.

Outside the gate of the seminary, they had a huge sign which advertised "The Joe-Paddy Festival." Intrigued, I asked my host what this was all about. "Oh," he explained. "It's a night of celebration honoring both Saint Joseph and Saint Patrick." That's where the Joe-Paddy came from! The menu for the party as you might guess, was corn beef and cabbage, Irish soda bread plus spaghetti and meatballs and Saint Joseph pastries. The best of both worlds as they say!

I think we all enjoy the food and the fun that goes along with the celebration of two of the most popular saints of the Catholic Church. But sometimes with all the celebrating, we kind of forget the saints that are being honored.

Saint Patrick, whose feast we commemorated on Saturday, did not originally come from Ireland-surprise! He was born in roman Britain about the year 387. At the age of 16, Patrick was captured by raiders and sold as a slave in Ireland. He was forced to work as a shepherd there and faced very difficult and harsh conditions. It was there tending the sheep that he prayed constantly to God. Really it was his captivity that led to his spiritual conversion.

After six years, Patrick escaped and went to France where he was ordained a priest. In a vision, he heard a call to come back to Ireland: "We beseech you, holy youth, come back to Erin and walk among us once more." Ordained a bishop, he received the commission from the Pope to go to Ireland and spread the faith. Ireland was a totally Pagan nation and Patrick's chief enemies were the Druids.

Through incredible determination, perseverance and courage, Saint Patrick established the Catholic faith firmly in Ireland, in his confession, he wrote: "God gave me the great grace that through me many peoples should be reborn in God, and then made perfect by confirmation and everywhere among them clergy ordained for a people so recently coming to believe, one people gathered by the Lord from the ends of the earth." In Saint Patrick, the Patron Saint of our own Archdiocese, we see the good that one person can do motivated by faith and the love of Jesus Christ!

Then what about Saint Joseph? We celebrate his feast this Monday. For one, Saint Joseph was not Italian-surprise! Rather we know from the gospel that he was a Jewish carpenter. Saint Joseph, however, was a man of utmost faith. Although not understanding everything, Joseph put his faith and trust in the Lord's plan. Betrothed to Mary, when he discovered that she was pregnant, he wanted to end the relationship. Through the intervention of an angel, Joseph discovered the true nature of Mary's pregnancy and did not look back. Joseph became the custodian or "Foster Father" of Jesus Christ.

He worked very hard at his carpentry trade and thus is a model for workers even today. Although we have no recorded words of his in the Scriptures, Joseph's humble and trusting faith in the face of enormous difficulties speaks volumes to us. He carried out his vocation with complete fidelity until the Lord called him home! He is the Patron Saint of the Universal Church.

Although Saint Patrick never marched in a parade with a Shillelagh and Saint Joseph never ate Sfingi pastries, still we honor these two holy men on their special days and beg their intercession. May the "Joe-Paddy" Saints bless you and your families in a special way this week!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome