

**St. Patrick's Day 2013  
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**It's not every year that St. Patrick's Day falls on a Sunday.**

**An so, and so, that's a very Irish expression.**

**At least it is in some parts of Ireland.**

**You'll hear someone use that wee phrase, usually at the end of a sentence. An so.**

**Sometimes they follow it with iy....and so, iy.**

**But not from the part of Ireland that my people are from, sure they never said that. An**

**so...**

**What was I sayin?**

**Sure it's not every year that St. Paddie's Day falls on a Sunday.**

**And I don't think it will every happen again that you'll get all three lined up together like this, St. Paddie's Day, Sunday and Holy Cross' Annual Meeting. And so....**

**So, let me be tellin ye...**

**Such a grand and glorious day as this, calls for a sermon like no other, an so...**

**I brought props.**

**Sure St. Paddie had his shamrocks and faith and begorra...an so...**

**I have a book.... a book called, "How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe."**

**By none other than Thomas Cahill, himself.**

**Faith and begorra...did ya ever in all your life hear such a ting as dat???**

**But that's not all, I've sumtin else...**

**Take a look at that there???**

**Sure there's nothing better on a St. Paddie's morning than a glass of Guinness....an so...**

**Well you'll notice that this here particular glass of Guinness, well she's as empty as Paddie's pig on market day...**

**An so...for the rest of this wee sermon you just think of me as the preacher who had we tippie before she set about tellin ya what's what.**

**My glass might be empty, but my heart is full...**

**Full a the devil some may say...or full a the love a Jesus if the truth be told...an so...**

**Where was I?**

**Yeah, sure it's St. Patrick's Day and all the world is Irish if only until ya fill their glass.**

**And then faith and begorra...that's when the truth comes out.**

**That's when you find out who really saved the world.**

**Now like any good Irish story, we're gonna wander a bit...so falla me, for like my dear old Nannie used to say, you'd better falla me cause I'm right behind ya.**

**That's right falla me I'm right behind ya.**

**But that should be no trouble for you lot, cause ya haven't touched a drop. Yet.**

**And a drop is all you'll be gettin for have ya seen the size of those Jeesus jiggers;**

**Why you wouldn't quench the thirst of the devil's flees with the wee titch of wine they give ya in dose wee glasses.**

**An so...the Irish and those that want to be Irish well this is a big day indeed.**

**An so... I want to tell us all, exactly how the Irish saved civilization, an, an, I'm gonna tell the truth about St. Patrick himself...an, an, while I'm at it, I wanna take to use about those Daughters of Zolophehad, now there were a bunch of girls if you know what I mean...and speaking about a bunch a girls, while I'm at it I wanna tell ya all about those Marys...**

**Faith and begorra, who'd be havin it?**

Sure there's Mary de Mother of Jesus, and then there's Mary Jesus' best friend, you know the girl from over Bethany way...and then there's that lovely Mary, you know the lovely girl from over there in Magdela who everyone is after confusing with dat other woman, the one the call, Mary who really wasn't Mary at'al, at'al, at'al...

Sure wasn't she after being healed, her being a sinner from the city and all...

Sure there's more Mary's in this story, than I have time to be tellin ya about.

So, we'll just leave Mary the mother of Jesus out of it, cause she's got nothing to do with this really,

Unless of course, I loose me, way...and then begorra, I be Jesus, Mary and Joseph, this and Jesus Mary and Joseph that...an so...

Were was I ???

I was needin a wee drink that's where I was....

An so...I need to teach yee a thing or two before we go much farther, because none of us have had enough to drink, to get the flavor of this story...so

Mind what I told you now...follow me cause I'm right behind you.

Any ways, ye need to know what it is I'm trying to teach ya now.

So...faith and begorra?

Faith and begorra? Anyone?

Sure are there no Lutheran's in the house?

For when someone says something and you have no earthly idea what that someone is talking about, you Lutherans you have a saying all your own...handed down to you by none other than Martin Luther himself...ach wasn't he a lovely wee fella?

And what would Luther say to my faith and begorra?

Why that wee lad from over there in Germany he would ask that good old Lutheran question: "What does this mean?"

Sure have ye not been readin yer catechisms?

Faith and begorra children?

Well let me tell ye what it means.

Faith and begorra is what the Irish say, when someone tells them somethin your grannie wouldn't believe on a bet.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, if I tell ya that the moon is made of blue cheese, faith and begorra is the only thing you can say.

Faith, well ya all know what that means.

And begorra, well that's what ye say, when you don't want to break one of the commandments, all though I can never remember which one...just don't be takin the Lord's name in vain.

Begorra, just means be God...only ye say that quickly that you Ma doesn't have time to clip your earhole.

Now what do good Lutheran's say, when someone tells ye the gods' honest truth???

Thomas...ye all know Thomas, he's my straight man.

Best man at my wedding was Thomas...Thomas my straight man:

What do good Lutheran's say when some on tells ya what something means????

"This is most certainly true."

Have yus not been reading your catechisms?

Faith and begorra, just the Irish way of say, that's about as certainly true as my old aunties money tree, it's out back in the yard if ye need a pound or two.

Right so...

The Irish. Well weren't they after saving civilization.

An you say....

Faith and begorra.

No it's true...it says so right here in this book.

Right this is gonna take too long...all you lot need to know is that the Ireland was full a these monks who copied everything down and if they had not of copied all the great works of literature down well, the very same barbarians who sacked Rome, would have seen too it that the Dark Ages just carried right on, and on and on, until the next thing you all know, there's nothing left to read but a few wee scratchings on the walls of the caves your all living in.

But I'm getting ahead of myself...and if your gonna folla me, cause I'm right behind you, well let me go back to St. Patrick for a wee minute.

Now I say Saint Patrick, but you know and I know that dear old Paddie was no saint.

Now you know, I spent a good lot of my childhood living in Belfast and my mother's people are all Irish, and I never even heard of St. Patrick until we moved to Canada.

And I know that I'm only half Irish, but me father's people are all from Wales, and Patrick who ever he was, all the history books say that Patrick was born in Wales.

So, you'd think that I'd know, also on account of this collar around my neck...do you know what they call this collar where I come from....a dog collar....I kid you not?

A dog collar, Jesus, Mary and Joseph...would you credit it?

A dog collar ...and what do they call what I do for a living where I come from??? Do any of use know???

A God botherer...A God botherer that's right I'm a professional God botherer, so you'd think I'd know if old Paddie is actually a saint or not?

Well the truth is that the official word is "no" on that one.

Faith and begorra, sure St. Patrick would have to be Lutheran to be a saint.

Because Rome in all her glory has never actually canonized Patrick.

And all good Lutheran's know that we are all saints, even if our halos do fall down around our ankles and trip us up now and again.

We are all saints and sinners my friends, saints and sinners.

Tank you dear old Marty for dat one, by God.

Now, I have it on good authority, that the reason Rome hasn't officially canonized Paddie is through no fault of his own.

Although he's a bit thin on the miracle side.

Turns out that you need two, bone fide miracles to take place after you die, and the only miracle you can find about Paddie after he died, was the one about the shamrocks sprouting out of his wounded old body after he snuffed it.

Unless of course you count the one about him havin chased all the snakes out of Ireland, because apart from there never havin been any snakes in Ireland to begin with, well you'd have a job to get rid of all the snakes that are there now...and if that ever happens sure it 'd be a miracle.

An so...where was I...yeah, it's not really the miracle thing that has Rome stalled on canonizing the ol' fella...

Faith an begorra on my dear mother's life, sure nobody knows if there ever was a fella back then called Patrick.

You see patricus was a Latin word...that was often used to refer to priests that were a bit big for their britches; bishops and the like.

And ye know what the Irish are like, on drink past the last and every priest is too big for his britches and it patricus this and patricus that and before you know it you've more Patrick's than you know what to do with and your story is getting out of hand and well, I'm tellin ya, there's no snakes around here on acounta that fella me lad over there at the monestary...you know what's his name..patricus...

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I'm tellin ya true, there's been that much beer down there gullets since those days, that nobody's sure which one of the three patricuses that are up for the job is actually the real St. Patrick who's not really a saint, but it doesn't really matter because, those stories they tell about him are just as true as the Irish having saved civilization.

Only I don't think it has anything to do with all those book they copied.

Faith and begorra, you have to laugh or you'll cry.

Sure it's the beer talkin.

And talk they do, but never mind because we're all Irish today, thanks to the saint that never was, good old Paddie, me lad.

Now where was I?

Right, do you remember those daughters of Zelophehad?

I thought you might of forgotten them.

Well let me tell you about those girls.

There was Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

Try calling those girls after you've had a few.

Old Zelophehad might have died trying for all we know, all we know is that he died.

And that he had no sons.

And it was written down, right there in the holy book of the law, the one God, himself, and I do mean himself, dictated to Moses no less; daughters could not inherit.

Now how, no way.

What kind of crazy law is that, you may well ask.

Well if it is written, it is written.

An so...all that Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah can do is resign themselves to the law.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, what could they do, they were women after all.

And women are supposed to just accept their lot.

Well not these girls.

They had no men about the place to speak for them, which meant for all intents and purposes that they had to just hold their wished...that's Belfast for keep quiet...and you all know how well the folks in Belfast hold their wished...

That's right, those girls Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah could no more hold their wished than a preacher with a captive audience can hold hers.

So they marched right up to the Tent of Meeting and demanded to speak to Moses himself.

Kinda like me marching up to the Vatican and demanding to speak to your man Francis.

An so, there they go, right up to Moses and they start arguing the Law with the Man himself...and they must have worn the poor fella down, because rather than give them an answer he goes to Himself, himself and what do you know but doesn't the big guy Himself agree with the Zelophehad's wee girls.

Faith and begorra, you've gotta love those lovely ladies, just because it's written down in a book doesn't mean that it should ruin your day.

Weren't they after getting old Zelophehad's worldly goods and didn't they manage to get Moses and Himself, himself to change the rules.

An so, now speaking of lovely ladies let me get back to all those Mary's.

Now our friend Jack Spong, he's not Irish, he comes from English stock, but today everybody's Irish, so let me tell you that Jack, he's not so sure that this anointing thing happened just the way that the fella who wrote the Gospel of John tells it.

Well, just because there's a story about a woman anointing Jesus in all four of the Gospel's doesn't really help us to get to the bottom of this story.

**Sure we'd need more Guinness than the Irish are willing to let leave Ireland to figure this one out.**

**Jesus, Mary and Joseph, none of those fellas, if they were all fellas? None of them, not Matthew, Mark, Luke or John were actually there.**

**The fellas who wrote the gospels they heard the stories about Jesus from some other folk, who heard it from the people who were there when Jesus was anointed.**

**By the time the writers of Matthew and Mark get around to writing the story down, they've forgotten what happened and where; why they must have gotten into the communion wine, because those two forgot the woman's name, who did the actual anointing.**

**To hear Matthew and Mark tell it, they were all sittin in the house of Simon the Leper, but when Luke tells it was Simon the Pharisee's house long before Jesus was fixing to go to Jerusalem.**

**According to John it was Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus, but it might just as well have been the unnamed woman, from the city who was a sinner, which is how it is written, in one story, then there are those who insist that it was actually Mary Magdalene and it wasn't Jesus feet but his head that was anointed.**

**And all the confusion has caused some men, to confuse Mary Magdalene with the unnamed women from the city who was a sinner.**

**And you know what fellas are like, mention the words, woman, city and sinner in the same sentence and before you know it their thinking prostitutes and then without a wam, bang, thankyou mam, poor old Mary Magdalene is tarred with that brush and everybody's talking about how Mary Magdalene was a whore; and before you know it she's not only the patron saint of perfume, but the patron saint of prostitutes.**

**All this despite the fact that she never had anything to do with the woman from the city who was a sinner, who might just have committed something other than a sexual sin, but no sense trying to right that wrong cause they'll just call you an angry feminist.**

**Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Mary Magdalene was the person Jesus chose to be the first witness to the resurrection; not Peter who was too busy dithering before the cock crowed.**

**It was Mary Madeline who was the fist Apostle. The Apostle to the Apostles if you must know.**

**But it's not her that we're talking about today.**

**It's the other Mary, Mary of Bethany and the anointing that she gave to Jesus.**

**Faith and begorra, wasn't Mary of Bethany the same Mary who in the words of Jesus chose the better part, and didn't she sit at Jesus feet listening to all he had to say; learning from him all that he could teach her.**

**And doesn't it say right there in the Holy Bible that Jesus loved her.**

**Ack, I'm tired of trying to sort this out for all those fellas that want us to keep silent in the churches.**

**If Himself, himself can change the rules after a wee word from the daughters of Zelophehad, and Mary of Bethany, can study at Jesus feet, and recognize a Messiah when she sees one, well then those fellas that are clinging to the words of scripture like they're some fixed unchangeable law, well, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, saints preserve us from books!!!!**

**An so, that's what I wanted to talk to you about in the first place.**

**Who was this fella Jesus when he was at home?**

**Well Mary recognized him, but not without wondering for herself who he might be.**

**Faith and begorra, wasn't he just after raising her brother Lazarus from the dead?**

**She knew exactly who Jesus was.**

**She'd seen him in action, she'd heard what he had to say and she was loved by Jesus.**

So, when push came to shove, and she knew he was about to head off to Jerusalem, right into the midst of those religious authorities and those crazy Romans who'd just as soon nail you to a tree as look at you, well Mary knew that it wasn't going to end well.

A fella like Jesus, saying what he says, doing what he does, teaching what he teaches, no it isn't going to end well.

The others tried to warn him.

But Mary knew there was no tellin Jesus.

So she showed him.

Mary went and got the costly ointment that they had left over from anointing Lazarus just the other day.

And she walked right up to Jesus and she, anointed him as if he were already dead.

And Judas well you could have knocked him over with a feather.

He began to sputter, his conscious getting the better of him and the best he could come up with was, "what about the poor?"

To hear him tell it he was all concerned about the poor.

But Jesus didn't let Judas get away with calling Mary out.

Jesus reminded them all that the poor will always be around and they'll have plenty of opportunities to take care of the poor.

What Mary is doing, is an act of love.

Tenderly, sensuously, anointing Jesus for his burial.

Or maybe just maybe she was anoint Jesus in the same way that the scriptures say that Moses anointed Aaron, or how Samuel anointed Saul and David.

They all said Jesus was the Messiah, the king the chosen on, maybe Mary actually believed it.

Maybe Mary had the courage to flaunt the law.

No woman would be permitted to preform the ritual act of a priest by anointing a king.

Faith an begorra, sisters and brothers, didn't Mary figure things out for herself.

Didn't she do what she had to do?

An so, that's what I wanted to say to you on this day when we celebrate the saint who may never have been.

The answers can't all be found in books.

The Law is not sacred and unchanging.

Stuff happens.

People change.

Truth is not absolute.

Each and every generation has to figure these things out for themselves.

We all have to look around us and see what's what.

The sky may still be blue, but there's a whole lot of darkness up there that neither Moses, nor Mary, nor Jesus himself, knew anything about back in the day.

And St. Patrick would have to hightail it out of Ireland and over to Rome if he were around today, because there are a whole lot of snakes in the church that need chasing away.

You and I dear friends will need to do what Christians have been doing for centuries, just like the Irish who did their best to save civilization, we will need to set about the task of saving Christianity, and then maybe we can set our sights on civilization.

Together we will need to take a long hard look at this Jesus fella and go beyond the books, deep into our hearts, into the very core of our beings so that when the time comes and they ask us, who this Jesus fella really is, we can tell them, who Jesus is here and now, in this place and this time.

We've got our work cut out for us.

And such fine work it is.

**And we've got one another for company and finer company you couldn't find anywhere else in all of Christendom.**

**For as my dear old Nanny said about all of you, "you're that nice, sure you wouldn't know you're Christian."**

**But that's another story for another day, and I'd need a few glasses of ale before I'll be telling you that story again.**

**For know, let us remember St Patrick, Welshman, who found himself among the Irish, a nicer lot of people you couldn't ask for, sure they were so nice that Patrick had nothing better to do than run around Ireland chasing snakes as if there were actually snakes to be drive out.**

**And while we celebrate this fella, let us remember those feisty daughters of Zelophehad: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah and all those Marys.**

**And let us have the courage to look beyond all the books into our own hearts and minds, and let us discover who this Jesus is, here and now, in this place and this time.**

**Because next week we're off to Jerusalem, and there's going to be a parade, and we're going to have to figure out what all the fuss is about.**

**Each one of us, in our own time, in our own way, must ask ourselves who this Jesus is.**

**Each one of us, in our own time, in our own way, must ask ourselves how and why we are going to follow Jesus and just were it is that Jesus is planning on taking us.**

**We'll need the books and a whole lot more than the books, we'll need the witness of all the saints who have gone before us, and most important of all we will need one another.**

**So, follow me! I'm right behind you!!!**

**This is most certainly true!**

**Now where's my glass?**