



## FATHER JOHN MALLEY, O.CARM. DIRECTOR OF CARMELITE MISSIONS

Dear Friend of the Missions,

Your wonderful support of Carmelite missionaries has been a blessing to us during 2005. We are so grateful that you are part of our Carmelite Mission family. Keep us in your prayers and in your sacrifices during this special Lenten season.

In 1995 our Province began its first foundation in Mexico at Transfiguration parish in the city of Torreon. Four American Carmelites—Joel Moelter, John Hertel, William Smith, and Tom Jordan—volunteered for this work. A few years later, a seminary house was opened in Mexico City. At the present time, there are 12 young men in various stages of formation: novitiate, experiencing an internship program, or studying philosophy and theology. During 2004, two students from Mexico, Mario Loya and Jose Luis Torres, were ordained to the priesthood.

Fortunately in Mexico today, there are many excellent young men who are interested in entering our seminary in Mexico City to begin their studies for solemn vows and the priesthood. They are attracted by our charism and spirituality, by our call to community, a deeper prayer life, and a ministry of service among the poor.

The seminary experience of these candidates turns out to be a very interesting journey. The vocation director who often makes the initial contact with them is an American Carmelite, Tom Jordan. The director of their formation program and novitiate training is Peruvian, Brother Rodolfo Aznaran. Their internship program after novitiate often takes place in a parish in El Salvador under the direction of an American Carmelite pastor, David Blanchard, who is also a part-time professor at the Washington Theological Union.

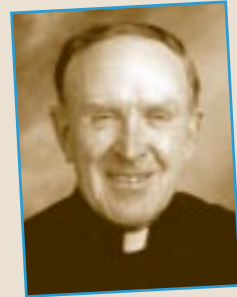
The original seminary house no longer has sufficient rooms nor living space for the young men who are applying to enter. As a result, the Province is in the process of enlarging the seminary and constructing additional rooms. We have included some photos of the seminarians and the construction project in this newsletter. We ask you to remember these young men in your prayers and your generosity.

Thank you for your continued interest in our Carmelite Missions and for your assistance to the people and to the seminarians that we try to support in Mexico and throughout the Third World. May the good Lord bless you for your kindness.

Love and peace,

*Fr. John Malley, O.Carm.*

Father John Malley, O.Carm.  
Director of Carmelite Missions



**REMEMBER THE CARMELITE MISSIONS WHEN YOU WRITE YOUR WILL**

# SAINT OF THE MONTH

## SAINT PATRICK

### FEAST DAY – MARCH 17

When the Romans conquered Britain about 55 B.C., they established a colony there, and today we find in Britain many relics of the Roman days. The most famous is Hadrian's wall near Closter and York. But Ireland was never subjected to Roman rule and remained untouched by the features of Roman life that came with it. The Romans referred to Ireland as *Hibernia*—the Winter Land. Our English word 'hibernate' comes from this Latin root and means 'to spend the winter,' so perhaps some Romans did actually spend a little time there during parts of the year.

Ireland was ruled, instead, by many minor kings and chieftains. They were strongly influenced by the Druid priests, who were very primitive and cruel in their worship and sacrifice. Ireland was an isle of pagan kings and warriors when St. Patrick arrived; he made it into an isle of saints and scholars.

Irish history does not begin with Patrick's mission to Ireland. People lived there for thousands of years before that. But the coming of Christianity marks a crucial point in Ireland's development, for it is only after Patrick's life and work that we can know anything about individual Irish people or comment with any certainty on the major events that marked their history. It is only with the coming of Christianity through Patrick that Ireland was brought fully within the mainstream of European culture and that Irish culture came to be known and felt abroad.

#### Early Life

We know more about Patrick than any other person from 5th century Ireland, yet he remains a baffling figure. There exists a *historical Patrick*, whose story we can read in his own words as later in life he wrote an autobiography and a defense of his work in



*Beginning of Construction Project in Mexico City*



*Fr. Mario Loya, O.Carm., from Mexico, Ordained in May, 2004 at Opening School Liturgy at Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson, AZ on October 1, 2004, Feast of St. Therese*

Ireland, entitled *Confession*. But there also exists a *legendary Patrick*, which began to develop two hundred years after his death—stories about his battle with the Druids at the hill of Tara in the presence of King Laoghaire, his connection with the see of Armagh, and his association with shamrocks and snakes. Both the real and the legendary Patrick had a very important impact on the development of Christianity in Ireland.

Patrick was a Briton, possibly from Carlisle in Wales, and he was born into a Christian family around the year 415. Since Britain had been an outpost of Roman rule since 55 B.C., its garrisons were filled with men from different corners of the empire, and some of them had taken on the Christian religion. By the time of Patrick's birth, the Christian faith had been established in Britain for more than 200 years. He himself tells us that he was born of Romano-British parents. Tradition gives us the names of his parents as Calpurnius and Conchessa.

We know little of his childhood, though Patrick does admit that his religious upbringing was not strong. During this particular time in history, the west coast of Britain (Wales) where Patrick was growing up was very prone to raids by Irish pirates, and many were taken back as slaves to Ireland. In his *Confession*, he tells us of just such an incident in his life: "I was

then barely sixteen. I had neglected the true God, and when I was carried off into captivity, along with a great number of people, it was well deserved." He was taken to a place in County Mayo, where he worked as a shepherd for six years. During this time of captivity, he learned the native language and also got to know of the Druid practices, both serving him well when he returned to evangelize the people of Ireland. During the time of his slavery, he tells us of his conversion to Christ:

"I found myself pasturing flocks daily, and I prayed a number of times each day. More and more the love and fear of God came to me, and faith grew and my spirit was exercised, until I was praying up to a hundred times every day—and in the night nearly as often. So that I would remain in the woods and on the mountain in snow, frost and rain, waking to pray before first light. And I felt no ill effect, nor was I in any way sluggish—because, as I now realize, the Spirit was seething within me."

Like Jacob in the Old Testament and St. Joseph in the New, Patrick had a message from God in a dream. He was told to flee his master and head for the coast. It was a two hundred mile trip, but he made it there safely and found sailors who at first refused to take him aboard, but after a silent prayer to God by Patrick, they agreed. In his *Confession* he tells us how they journeyed after landing and suffered great hunger. The captain and crew taunted him about his Christianity and faith in God, but he told them "to turn in good faith and with all your heart to the Lord my God, to



*First Year Theologians in Malang*



*Postulants Beginning Religious Life in East Timor*

whom nothing is impossible." They did, and soon a herd of swine appeared that gave them an ample food supply. Eventually they reached a settlement, and Patrick was reunited with his family. He was now in his early twenties.

#### Mission to Ireland

Patrick's peaceful freedom with his family was soon disturbed by another dream. He saw the people of Ireland and heard a voice saying to him: "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us again." His heart was willing, but he was not ready. Apparently he asked the advice of others, and he was encouraged to prepare for the priesthood. Most authorities agree that he went to Lerins (an island near Cannes, France), where he put himself for many years under the guidance of the saintly Bishop of Auxerre, Germanus. There are some who say he went to Rome, but that is not certain. What we do know is that Pope Celestine had sent a certain Palladius to begin the evangelization of Ireland, but he soon died. It seems that the influence of Germanus caused the Pope to commission Patrick, who was soon ordained a Bishop and sent on his mission to the people of Ireland.

During the ensuing years we learn from his own *Confession* and from the legendary stories of the seventh and eighth centuries that there were many challenging encounters between Patrick and the

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# SAINT OF THE MONTH

## SAINT PATRICK

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various kings, chieftains, and Druid priests who held important positions among the Irish people. One of the first took place on the slopes of Slemish, where he had been a slave. Patrick was accosted by Dichu, a chieftain, who drew his sword to slay him. Dichu raised the sword, but his arm became rigid and he could not move it until he declared himself friendly to Patrick. He asked for instructions and was converted. His followers did likewise.

The supreme monarch of Ireland then was Laoghaire who kept court at Tara in Meath. He called the lesser chieftains and rulers to Tara to celebrate a feast, and for Patrick this was a special opportunity. He knew that if he converted the king and the chieftains the subjects would soon follow. So Patrick went to Tara for the famous confrontation with Laoghaire, which eventually changed the history of Ireland.

According to tradition, Patrick arrived at the hill of Slane, at the opposite end of the valley from Tara on March 25, which in that year was Holy Saturday, the eve of Easter. We are told that the next day he had a confrontation with the Druid priests much like the one we read of in the Old Testament of Elijah and the priests of Baal. Patrick was victorious in the encounter, and he now had the permission of the High King Laoghaire to preach Christianity throughout all of Ireland. While the High King does not seem to have accepted the Catholic faith, it seems certain that many of his court and the chieftains did. Also at Tara, it is said that the tradition started of Patrick using the shamrock to explain the Trinity, and even to our day the shamrock remains the symbol of Ireland, a Catholic nation.

Slowly, Patrick's preaching reached the hearts of the people, and he made steady progress in spreading the faith. The "Lives" of Patrick and the first Irish saints are filled with accounts of the early missionaries traveling through the country-side performing miracles: bringing fertility to the land, curing illnesses, and taking vengeance on those who stood in the way of God's work. In his *Confession*, Patrick also tells us of the important work of his companions and followers—Benignus, Auxilius, Iserminus, and Fiacc—who fanned out throughout the island, bringing the life and teachings of Jesus Christ to all. There was still much persecution and suffering for all of these missionaries, but through the power of God the Catholic Church became firmly established in Patrick's lifetime with bishops, priests and churches—a heritage of faith so deep that heresy and apostasy has never tainted the Irish Church



**Jonathan Montes de Oca – Student for Priesthood at New Carmelite Seminary in Mexico City**



**Jesus Larios – An Intern Seminarian Helping at our Transfiguration Parish in Torreon, Mexico**

### Death of Patrick

One of the keys to Patrick's holiness is his deep humility and trust in God. He starts his *Confession* with this protestation: "I, Patrick, am a most uncultivated man, and the least of all the faithful, and contemptible in the eyes of many." And in another place he says: "I was like a stone lying in the deep mud, and God who is mighty came and in His mercy lifted me up." He carried these qualities with him to his death.

Tradition tells us that Patrick was given the last rites by St. Tassach, and that he died at Sabhall on March 17, 492, where he had built his first church. His earthly mission was over but from heaven he continued to intercede for his people. The Irish Church has been one of the glories of Christianity throughout the centuries. Immigrants from Ireland were an important element in the history of Catholicism in the United States. An overwhelming number of bishops in the American Church came from Irish roots. The Irish also founded the Church in Australia and New Zealand, and even during this past century Irish missionaries have continued to bring the message of Christ to the far corners of the world. The memory of their Saint still burns brightly in many Irish hearts. At the close of his *Confession*, Patrick only gives credit to God for his exceptional missionary work on that island: "Again and again, I would reiterate ... and testify, in truth and in joy of heart, before God and His angels, that I had never had any reason beyond the Gospel and its promises, ever to return to that people from whom I had formerly barely escaped." Ireland and the world have truly been blessed because of this remarkable man and saint.