

St. Patrick's Day



Everybody knows that St. Patrick, whose holiday we celebrate on March 17th, is the patron saint of Ireland. Not everybody knows, however, that his real name was Maewyn Succat. He was born in Roman Britain in the late fourth century in what is now Scotland. Born into a wealthy Roman family, his life changed dramatically at the age of sixteen, when he was abducted by Irish marauders and spent the following six years working as a slave. During his years in captivity in Ireland, he became a devoted Christian. He also mastered the Celtic language, which later became invaluable in his efforts to convert Ireland to Christianity.

After his escape Maewyn followed his spiritual calling and became a priest. Having adopted the name Patrick, which derived from the Latin words *pater civium* (the father of his people), he returned to Ireland as a missionary.

His task was to convert the Irish to Christianity. It took him several years to accomplish his work; he built churches, sanctuaries and schools. On numerous occasions he is said to have miraculously escaped death.

There are a lot of legends surrounding his person, one of which tells the story of St. Patrick driving away all snakes from Ireland, the snakes possibly being the metaphor for old pagan beliefs. One of the most popular stories, however, is the one concerning shamrock, a three-leafed clover, which was used by St. Patrick to explain the idea of the Holy Trinity, showing that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, represented by separate leaves, created one whole.

Nowadays, St. Patrick's Day, originally a religious holiday commemorating his death, is celebrated in a more secular manner. It is a public holiday in Ireland. Remember to wear green on this day in America, or you are in danger of being pinched. People attend St. Patrick's Day parades, the first of which took place in America

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in the 18th century, they go to concerts, theatres and firework shows. Some of them wear a shamrock in honour of the day.

Glossary:

- wealthy – zamożny
- abducted – uprowadzony, porwany
- marauder – rabuś
- slave – niewolnik
- in captivity – w niewoli
- devoted – wierny, oddany
- to master – opanować, wyuczyć się
- Christianity – chrześcijaństwo
- invaluable – bezcenny, nieoceniony
- spiritual calling – powołanie duchowe
- derive from – pochodzić, wywodzić się z
- accomplish – zrealizować, osiągnąć
- numerous – liczny
- miraculously – cudownie
- drive away – odstraszyć, odpędzić
- pagan beliefs – pogańskie wierzenia
- shamrock – koniczyna
- three-leafed clover – trzylistna koniczyna
- Holy Trinity – Trójca Święta
- the Holy Spirit – Duch Święty
- secular – świecki
- manner – sposób
- public holiday – święto państwowe

THE AMERICAN EASTER CUSTOMS

EASTER EGGS

Easter is a religious holiday, but some of its customs, such as Easter eggs, clearly relate to some pagan traditions. The egg, an ancient symbol of new life, has been associated with pagan festivals celebrating spring. From a Christian perspective, Easter eggs are said to represent Jesus' stepping out from the tomb and his resurrection. Decorating eggs for Easter is a tradition that probably dates back to the 13th century. One explanation

for this custom is that eggs were formerly a forbidden food during the Lent, so people would paint and decorate them to indicate the end of the period of fasting, then eat them on Easter as a celebration.

Easter egg hunts and egg rolling are two popular egg-related traditions. In the USA the White House Easter Egg Roll, a race in which children push decorated, hard-boiled eggs across the White House lawn, is an annual event held on the first Monday after Easter. The White House Egg Roll was orga-



nized for the first time in 1878. The event has no religious significance, although some people consider egg rolling symbolic of the stone blocking Jesus' tomb being rolled away, leading to his resurrection.

EASTER CANDY

Easter is the second best-selling candy holiday in America, just after Halloween. Surely, the most popular sweet treats linked with this day are chocolate eggs, which date back to early 19th century. Another egg-shaped candy, the jelly bean, became associated with Easter in the 1930s. According to the National Confectioners As-



sociation, over 16 billion jelly beans are made in the USA each year for Easter. Nevertheless, for the past decade, the top-selling Easter candy has been the marshmallow Peep, which first was made in the 1950s. The

original Peeps were handmade, marshmallow-flavoured yellow chicks, but other shapes and flavours were later introduced, including chocolate mousse bunnies.

