

Daily Homily
4 Lent 2021
St. Patrick, Bishop and Confessor
Optional Memorial
17 March 2021
[USCCB Daily Readings](#)

In some of my Lenten reading,
I stumbled upon this little known, perhaps forgotten fact,
that in the old Roman Missal for the Mass
that is before the Second Vatican Council
there was a Mass to be said the Friday after the Second Sunday of Lent,
it was called the Mass of the Holy Shroud of our Lord...
the shroud being the burial cloth of Christ,
now stored (next to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati's tomb)
in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy.
The prayers for that Mass offer thanks to God
for this footprint of Christ crucified image on the cloth.

I found that to be an interesting image... a footprint of
the crucified Christ's image.
It made me pause for quite a bit
and take that to prayer.

I think I read once,
that in Irish lore, the Irish whose spirituality is so
closely connected to God the Creator
and honors so reverently all of God's creation
and God's creative work ...
that the Irish believe that while God created this world of ours,
as He stepped from place to place on this earth,
as He stood on the land he formed,
as He worked over and gazed at the things created,
that where ever His divine foot rested on the land...
that bit of land was bound and determined to be a place of
honor and worship to God...
that place where God's foot rested was destined to be
a holy place, a church, a cathedral, a monastery even.

So wherever you see a church, it is a place where the footprint of God can be found.

I love that image, given to us by the Irish.

Let me take it even further.

In the saints we find in their lives that they are a living footprint of Christ himself... in how they prayed and carried themselves in life.

St. Patrick ... a missionary of Catholicism in a then Pagan Ireland, to this day, his footprints are all over the place.

One such place is a little far-away place called Lough Derg, resting in the middle of the Shannon River and from the shores of Donegal it rises out of the water like some Alcatraz... it is noted for its grey, cold monastic like buildings on a tiny, confined island with nothing else around.

Lough Derg is known as the island of perpetual Lent, a place of penance and place of retreat.

It is known as this because tradition holds that St. Patrick would sail out to this island for days on end to be alone with God in a cave without food ... just water and prayer.

So his footprint of penitence continues to this day.

The island ... like our Church as a whole ...

everyone is most welcomed but not on their own terms.

If one is doing the three day retreat on Lough Derg...

as soon as the boat docks on the island, shoes are discarded.

A fast is maintained... one meal per day of water and bread and perhaps some soup if necessary.

Silence is a must.

A regiment of prayers, rosaries, Stations of the Cross, daily Mass and confession are on the schedule.

This even includes rising for prayer several times during the night, most serious pilgrims to this sight forego and sacrifice sleep even.

It is the island of sacrifice ... of saying "no" to self, so that one can say "yes" to God...

this is what St. Patrick found as his feet rested in that island soil, this is what pilgrims have found over the centuries to this day

as they rest their feet into the footprint of Patrick on Lough Derg.

And because it is a holy site...

really they nestle their feet into the footprint of God found there.

Maybe to our American ears and ways,
this sounds insane... but, along with Knock Shrine, it is one of the most
popular religious destination sites in Ireland,
as long as one is mentally and spiritually prepared to step into that soil.

From the word of God today,
Jesus is telling us that he is at work because his father is at work,
he cannot do anything on his own, but will only do what he sees his father
doing,
for the father and the son share love and share everything...
in other words...
Jesus' foot is planted firmly in the footprint of the Father.

This St Patrick's Day and this Lenten Day...
do the same,
as you walk this day,
as you walk this Lenten Season,
place your foot firmly in the footprint of the Father.
And wherever you step may your prayer, your holiness, your faithfulness
leave it's mark...
like another St. Patrick who left the mark of his footprint on that Irish sod,
like the image of the crucified Christ
marked and printed on the linen cloth of the Shroud of Turin.
Place your foot firmly in the footprint of the Father...
and leave your mark of holiness on the world.