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Learning from St Patrick

“My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:1

Hello friends,

I am writing to you from the comfort of my home, apart from you physically, but united with you in spirit. You are much on my mind.

Today is the beautiful celebration of St. Patrick, treasured saint of the Irish and Celtic peoples. I have been thinking a bit about his wonderful story – enslaved as a child and taken to Ireland from his English home, raised in that foreign land. After returning to his homeland, he became Christian, and went back to his enslavers to proclaim the gospel, or so it is said. I wonder if I would have had the charity and generosity of spirit not only to forgive those who had done me so great a harm, but to want to bring them the blessing of life. I hope so!

There is a beautiful and certainly very ancient prayer which has come to be called St. Patrick’s breastplate. Whether the original Patrick wrote it or not, it seems to me a good offering for our community today, because of its power and its strength – as you will see. It is quite long – and some of the theology (angels and demons) is not quite our own. But the underlying feeling most certainly is: that we are kept safe because of the power of God.

I invite you to join me in praying through this prayer today. If it is too much for you, I have used *italics* to mark the part of the prayer towards the end which sings with the clearest tune. Just read that. However, if you choose to read it all, do try to read it aloud. And take your time! It is not to be rushed. But like a fine wine, savoured and held on the tongue. These ancient words would have been chanted before a journey, or upon rising each day, or in times of distress, such as our own.

We join our hearts to the many hearts who have leaned upon God through this beautiful prayer.

Grace to you, and peace,

Kate

St Patrick's Breastplate

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with his baptism,
Through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,
Through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension,
Through the strength of his descent for the judgment of Doom.

I arise today
Through the strength of the love of Cherubim,
In obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In prayers of patriarchs,
In predictions of prophets,
In preaching of apostles,
In faith of confessors,
In innocence of holy virgins,
In deeds of righteous ones.

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven:
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth,
Firmness of rock.

*I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me:
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,*

*God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptations of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,*

*Afar and anear,
Alone and in multitude.*

*Christ to shield me today.
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ in the mouth of all who speak of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.*

*I arise today
Though a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness,
Of the Creator of Creation.
Amen.*

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*