

What is religion? It is a way of communicating and reunification with God, a method for the formation of the path for perception of the true values. But on a broader scale, the religion is much more. Religion occupies a prominent place in the past, present and future of any nation without exception. People to preserve their culture and identity, while they keep and reveres his memory and history. Religion with its religious traditions is one of the main backbones of culture of the people. In Catholic Ireland the main religious and national holiday is St. Patrick's Day.

Every year, March 17 is the day of the main patron saint of Ireland - St. Patrick's Day. According to legend, St. Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland and cast out all the snakes.

Mevin Sukkat, which was later the whole world knew as St. Patrick was born in the late fourth century in Britain in the family of Roman citizens Kalfurnius and Konchessa. When he was 16 years old, he was captured by pirates. He was sold as a slave to Ireland, where for six years he has been grazing the cattle. There he found the Christian faith. About that period of life he later wrote: " I have prayed many times a day. Love for God and fear of God more and more came to me, and my faith was strengthened ". According to legend, God showed him how to escape from captivity. Six years later, he heard the voice of God: "You will come back home soon". "Look, your ship is waiting for you". Patrick escaped from captivity and, thanks to the prayers, was able to persuade the captain to take him to the ship. Mevin returned to Britain, some time before that spent in the monasteries of Gaul. He met with the French bishop Germanus (Saint-Germain), which helped him gain a foothold on the path of spiritual development.

In Britain, he got a vision, which ordered him to return to Ireland to draw its inhabitants to Christianity. Mevin returned to Gaul, where he completed his education. He was ordained a deacon named Patrick, was later ordained as a bishop. Pope Celestine II blessed Patrick for the Christianization of Ireland, and in the thirties of the fifth century, he began his mission. It is believed that feature of the establishment of Christianity in Ireland was that it was made through the efforts of Patrick almost bloodless. St. Patrick's personality and his work as a missionary associated with many legends. Thus, it is believed that he brought writing to Ireland, and cast out all the snakes from the island. Scientists explain this by the fact that during the spread of snakes over different continents Ireland was an island already. It is also believed that God promised Patrick that Ireland will go under water for seven years before the world's end to avoid the grief and distress, and that the saint himself will judge the Irish in the Day of Judgment. One of the main Legend holds that the Patrick explained to the Gentiles the doctrine of Trinity on the example of cloverleaf ("God is one in three persons as three leaves growing from one stem.") Patrick died on March 17 in 493rd (according to another version, in 461st). He was canonized by the Church before the division into east and west, so revered as a saint in both. In addition to Ireland, St. Patrick patronizes Nigeria because the Irish missionaries preached the Christianity there.

The Irish began to celebrate St. Patrick's Day as a kind of national holiday back in X-XI centuries, not only in Ireland but also in other European countries. In the early seventeenth century, this day was included in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church.

The main Irish holiday associated with many Christian and folk traditions. To the Christian traditions refers annual pilgrims climbing to the Holy Mountain Croagh Patrick, where the saint prayed and fasted for 40 days. According to legend, it was on this hill Saint Patrick made one of his miracles - commanded to snakes of all Irish land to gather at his feet, and then drive them out. To national tradition refers the tradition of drinking at least one glass of alcohol in any pub. Initially, the most common drink in the day was whiskey, but subsequently ale has become very popular. There is a so-called "Patrick's Cup" – the unit of drunk whiskey. Before the last cup of whiskey, it was necessary to put into the glass a shamrock. After drinking whiskey a shamrock supposed to be throw behind the back over the left shoulder for good luck.

Another main Irish tradition is to be dressed in all green in honor of the holiday and to attach to clothing the main symbol - a shamrock. Many other nations associate shamrock not

only with St. Patrick's Day, but also with the people of Ireland as well. Therefore it is rightly said that the nation is nation's culture and traditions. Besides the shamrock, the symbol of this day is also considered leprechauns (the fabulous creatures of small stature, sewing the shoes for other fantasy creatures and who are custodians of the treasures), a harp (depicted on the emblem of Ireland) and a shileyla (the oak or thorn stick with a curved end that was used as a stick curling).

In St. Patrick's Day people cook special dishes. Despite the fact that March 17th usually coincides with Lent, this day people cook a meat. There is a popular belief that Saint Patrick turns all forthcoming meat into fish in this day. A traditional dish is the cabbage with bacon or corned beef. In addition, there is a variety of dishes prepared using different kinds of beers.

In St. Patrick's Day the parades take place. The first one took place on the territory of the United States in the seventeenth century. The tradition is to friendly pinching those who not wearing green on March 17 was originated in the U.S. Besides, many American cities have a tradition to dye the reservoirs in green at St. Patrick's Day. In Ireland, the first parade was held in 1931. These parades are held annually, not only in Ireland but also in the USA, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Argentina and even in Russia.

St. Patrick's Day is not only the celebration of the Irish saint, but also the soul of Irish and Irish culture. There are not a lot of nations, whose national day was celebrated with so large scale in other countries. Even here in Russia on March 17th, you can see the people dressed in green and with shamrocks. It means that a thousand years the Irish people preserved their culture and their identity, they respectfully honor the traditions of their ancestors. We can and we should take an example from them.