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Albert Bridge took this photo of sheep grazing near Mt. Slemish in Ireland's County Antrim. The view is from Buckna, looking toward the ancient volcanic plug known as Mt. Slemish. Some scholars believe this is the area where Maewyn Succat (the future St. Patrick) tended sheep after his kidnapping and enslavement. License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

During the time Maewyn Succat (the future St. Patrick) was a captive shepherd in Ireland, apparently sold (like other slaves) to a chieftan named Miliucc, he was lonely and afraid. Historians believe he roamed the slopes of Mt. Slemish, County Antrim's ancient volcanic plug, during the years he was away from his family.

Turning to God, for support and solace, he became a devout Christian. Amidst the area's beauty, if this is indeed where he was taken, the young man often slept outside with the animals he cared-for. Patrick describes those times in his *Confession*:

...I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time. (The Confession of St. Patrick, point 16, available for online viewing at [Readings in Church History](#), edited by Jonathan Marshall, at page 155.)

Six years passed. Then ... Patrick had a dream - one of several which would change his life. This time, he sensed a voice telling him to leave his captors behind:

[o]ne night in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me: 'You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country.' And again, a very short time later, there was a voice prophesying: 'Behold, your ship is ready. (See [The Confession of St. Patrick](#), point 17.)



The young shepherd was not living by the sea. Where was his ship? And if one were "ready," how would he reach it?

And it was not close by, but, as it happened, two hundred miles away, where I had never been nor knew any person. (Confession, point 17.)

Could it really be that the young man, now twenty-two years old, could break free from his oppression? How would he know where to go? How would he know which ship to board?

And shortly thereafter I turned about and fled from the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came, by the power of God who directed my route to advantage (and I was afraid of nothing), until I reached that ship. (Confession, point 17.)



It was, indeed, time for Patrick to escape from Ireland.

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Young St. Patrick Has a Ship

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Mt. Slemish and Braid Valley

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St. Patrick - Praying and Working in Snow

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St. Patrick - Praying in the Rain

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Ireland - Seen From Space

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