

The Breastplate of St. Patrick

This 9th century Irish prayer is also called the “Lorica”. This is the Latin word for a cuirass which was a breast-plate and a back-plate made of leather or metal bound together which was used for protection in battle. In the Christian monastic tradition the term denoted a prayer of petition in which protection is called for against the power of evil in its many forms. It is probably inspired by the passage in Ephesians 6, 10-20 which speaks about putting on the armour of God (see Eph 6 v.14).

In this prayer the spiritual armour is the Name of the Trinity (stanza 1), the Mysteries (i.e. saving works) of Christ which brought us salvation (stanza 2), the powers (“virtues”) of God visible in the natural world (stanza 3), God’s protective and guiding “hand” (stanza 4), Christ’s intimate and reassuring presence (stanza 5) and again, in the final stanza (6) the Name of the Trinity but in this instance invoking the Three Persons by name.

The prayer calls to mind the beautiful truth found in the Letters of St. Paul of “putting on Christ” (see Rom 13, 14; Gal 3, 27 & Phil 2, 4) which encourages the Christian, now renewed “in Christ” through Baptism, to actively accept the virtuous way of life that this opens up to them and to fight “the good fight” (2 Tim 4, 7).

In praying the “Breastplate” you might like to access “A Way to Pray” (<https://carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer/>) to find help.



*“The Way of Prayer” is a work of the Discalced Carmelite
Order of the Australia-Oceania region.
<https://carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer/>*

The Breastplate (“Lorica”) of St. Patrick

1.

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three.

2.

I bind this day to me forever,
by power of faith, Christ’s incarnation,
his baptism in the Jordan river,
his death on cross for my salvation,
his bursting from the spiced tomb,
his riding up the heavenly way,
his coming at the day of doom,
I bind unto myself today.

3.

I bind unto myself today
the virtues of the starlit heaven,
the glorious sun’s life-giving ray,
the whiteness of the moon at even,
the flashing of the lightning free,
the whirling wind’s tempestuous shocks,
the stable earth, the deep salt sea
around the old eternal rocks.

4.

I bind unto myself today
the power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need,
the wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
the word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

5.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

6.

I bind unto myself the name,
the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three,
of whom all nature has creation,
eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation;
salvation is of Christ the Lord!

