

# The Associates World

Issue No. 59, March 2021  
A Monthly Newsletter for Paulist Associates

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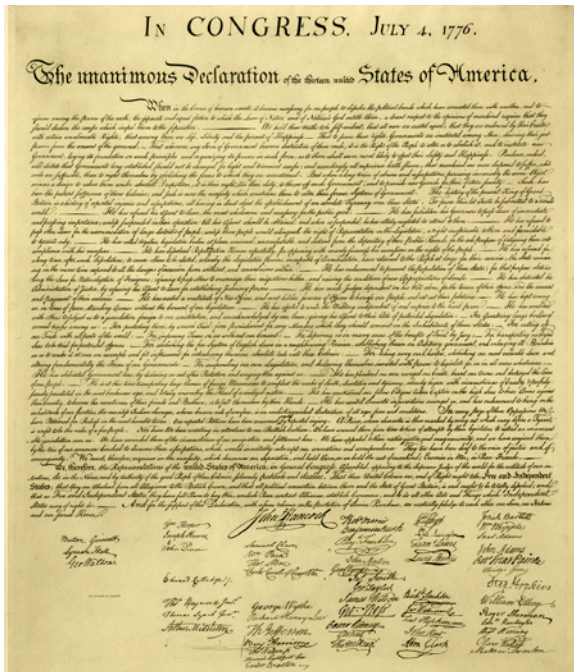
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## Revisiting Hecker's thoughts on Church & Democracy

By Denis M. Hurley

I am neither a political scientist nor an expert of the inner workings of the mind of Paulist founder Isaac Hecker.

But recent events in the world of politics (particularly national, but throughout the system) and the fairly strong evidence of rampant moral bankruptcy inherent in many of the political practitioners – and their followers – in the United States have caused me to ponder more deeply on Hecker's insistence that American Democracy and Catholic religious thinking were on concurrent and complimentary paths.

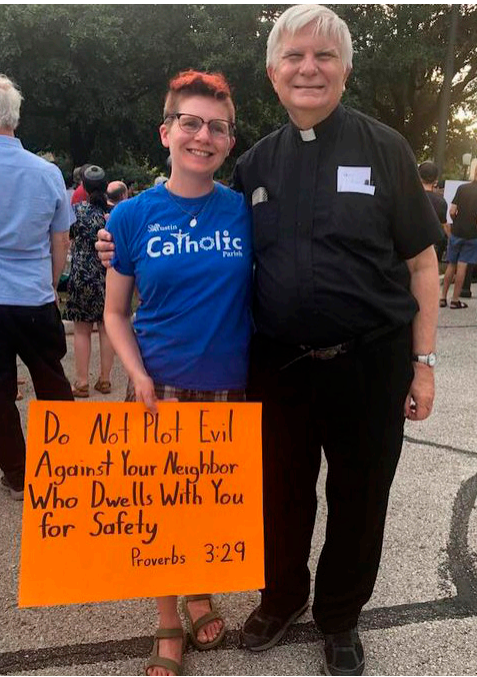


“There exists,” he wrote in *Catholic World* in 1879, “a necessary correlation between the truths contained in the Declaration of Independence and the revealed truths of Christianity ...”

He sees that correlation in the Declaration's early reference to “...the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God...”. Indeed, he sees the principles of Democracy and of Christianity as significant, and interdependent “truths.”

That interdependence is what interests me in light of the recent political history of the United States – and of the history of this country during Hecker's lifetime. It may be that those destined for sainthood have vision that lets them see through the day-to-day stumblings of humanity and focus on inherent, if rarely achieved ideals.

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Paulist Fr. Bruce Nieli at the Lights for Liberty rally in Austin, TX, in July, 2019.

That might account for the optimistic nation-view/church-view that characterizes so much of Hecker’s thinking.

“The light of reason,” he wrote in that same *Catholic World* article, “is the light of God in the soul, and the natural rights of man are conferred by God directly upon man . . . With the light of these statements [about natural rights] the truths of which are in conformity with her authoritative teaching, the connection of the Catholic Church with the American republic can be easily understood. . .”

And, in a review of Andrew Carnegie’s *Triumphant Democracy or Fifty Years March of the Republic*, Hecker -- bundling together democracy, reason, and “higher truths” -- wrote, “For the democratic man naturally tends to positive belief in the higher truths of reason . . . Does not the unfettered human mind under guidance of divine grace instinctively long to be more ennobled by the highest truth? . . . What so becomes a free man as the firm persuasion that his nobility is rooted in the infinite majesty of the Deity in whose image he is created?”

As Bruce Nieli, CSP, wrote in a 2006 *America* magazine article, “Hecker, a prophet and eternal optimist, believed that these two institutions, the United States of America and the Catholic Church, could help and complement each other. *In fact, he felt that they were destined for one another.* [my italic]”

It may have required an “eternal optimist” to conjoin the “light of God in the soul” with the state of American Democracy during Hecker’s lifetime.

It would have been difficult, for instance, to cheerfully acknowledge that light in those who:

- brought legions of Black Africans to our democratic shores in death ships so that they could be essentially designated as non-humans and worked to death to make White masters wealthy;
- fought a civil war that killed hundreds of thousands God’s noble children in an effort to maintain their ability to keep the enslavement system alive;
- created, after that war was over, “Black Codes” and Jim Crow systems that kept alive what Douglas A. Blackmon, in his 2009 Pulitzer Prize-winning book called, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*.



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on [Unsplash](#).

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I imagine that Hecker, like all people of good will who have to live in a tainted world, understood and deplored these depravities. And, while the irony is obvious, it is typical of Hecker, I think, that he looked beyond the grim realities the nation faced and concluded that the “light of God” could still be found in the ideals of American Democracy, even if it seemed clouded by a disgraceful disfigurement of the principles found in the *Declaration of Independence*.

And that’s why, in the United States of today, we perhaps need to huddle together with Hecker and realize that he isn’t alone in the hope he exudes and that we can, if we approach the world correctly, share in that hope.

I have some personal experience of that based on a Hecker-like figure in my life. He wasn’t a Paulist, but a Jesuit, a theologian, and my father’s first cousin and close friend. He was six-foot-six-inches tall and the most obvious physical example of a White man you’d ever seen. His name was Philip S. Hurley – “Father Phil” to the family

While he taught at Fordham, he worked with the Catholic Interracial Council in the 1950s and ‘60s. He was one of those who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

At the end of his teaching career, he went to Puerto Rico to learn Spanish and, on his return, he became a pastoral assistant at a South Bronx church where he opened a food pantry.

The *NY Daily News* reported that more than a thousand of “the poor, homeless and helpless” of the neighborhood “flocked” to the church on the news of his death.

He was a Catholic who had lived during a period in the 1960s when both the Church and the Nation went through processes of re-imagination.

Like Hecker, he was a man of hope and of optimism.

I think of both of them as I encounter the United States Democracy of 2021 and try to reconcile it with their hope that the most basic of our inner ideals could find their expression in the common public life of a nation.

Despite having kept our cruelest and most vicious sides in check for some long while, we have, in the past few years (though not with the consent of all):



**Edmund Pettus Bridge:** Bloody Sunday-officers await demonstrators.  
Photo: [U.S. Department of Justice](#) — This is an image of a place or building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States of America.



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- kept children in cages and separated them, perhaps forever, from their families;
- allowed racist and hateful nationalistic “ideals” to come to the fore and find an acceptable place in our dialogue;
- been negligent and irresponsible in failing to manage the spread of the pandemic especially among the poorest and most vulnerable of us;
- created (or allowed to be created) an Orwellian lie-based political system that supports and encourages division and hatred among citizens;
- sowed the seeds of doubt regarding the integrity of our presidential election that culminated in a violent attack on our Capitol;
- and so on.

How far have we come since the Civil War? And where do we look for the hope and civic enthusiasm that Hecker enunciated in so many ways?

Well, here’s a thought. . . . It’s from Paulist Associates Handbook.

*“Paulist Associates find opportunities in their daily lives, through their various vocations, to exemplify the mission commitments of the Paulists in the charism of Fr. Isaac Hecker. His charism specified that, in modern American/Canadian culture, the Holy Spirit was at work, making it conducive to invite people to faith, and helping the Church understand its role in modern, democratic societies. His charism was marked by openness to others and a particular welcome to outsiders.”*



**January 6, 2021:** Crowd of Trump supporters marching on the US Capitol ultimately leading the building being breached and several deaths. Photo credit: [TapTheForwardAssist](https://www.theforwardassist.com). This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

So, even when things are looking bad, as they often do in the U.S. brand of democracy, the Hecker charism can emerge in Paulist priests, Paulist Associates – and the occasional very tall Jesuit.

A good way to start, I think is to get psyched up by reading and thinking more of what Hecker had to say about the “light of God” as it can be reflected in the actual and sincere practice of Democracy.

Following that, perhaps we can find new and better ways to take an active part in the process.

*Later in this issue I’m going to ask you to think of ways that you and your Associates group colleagues bring the Paulist/Hecker charism to the world we live in. And I’ll ask you to share your stories on these pages.* 🌐

*Denis Hurley is a Boston Associate, a Lecturer in Communication at Boston University and Editor of the Associates World.*

## *Beyond*

Daylight, while informing our  
Earthly surroundings,  
Can also limit and distract us from reality.  
We place great confidence in our senses and intellect,  
Our reason and logic.

Yet when the sun's rays fade from the sky,  
As the Earth makes its perpetual revolution  
From day to night,

If we pull ourselves away from our  
technological idols with endless luminescence,  
and immerse ourselves in the velvet embrace of the untainted night,

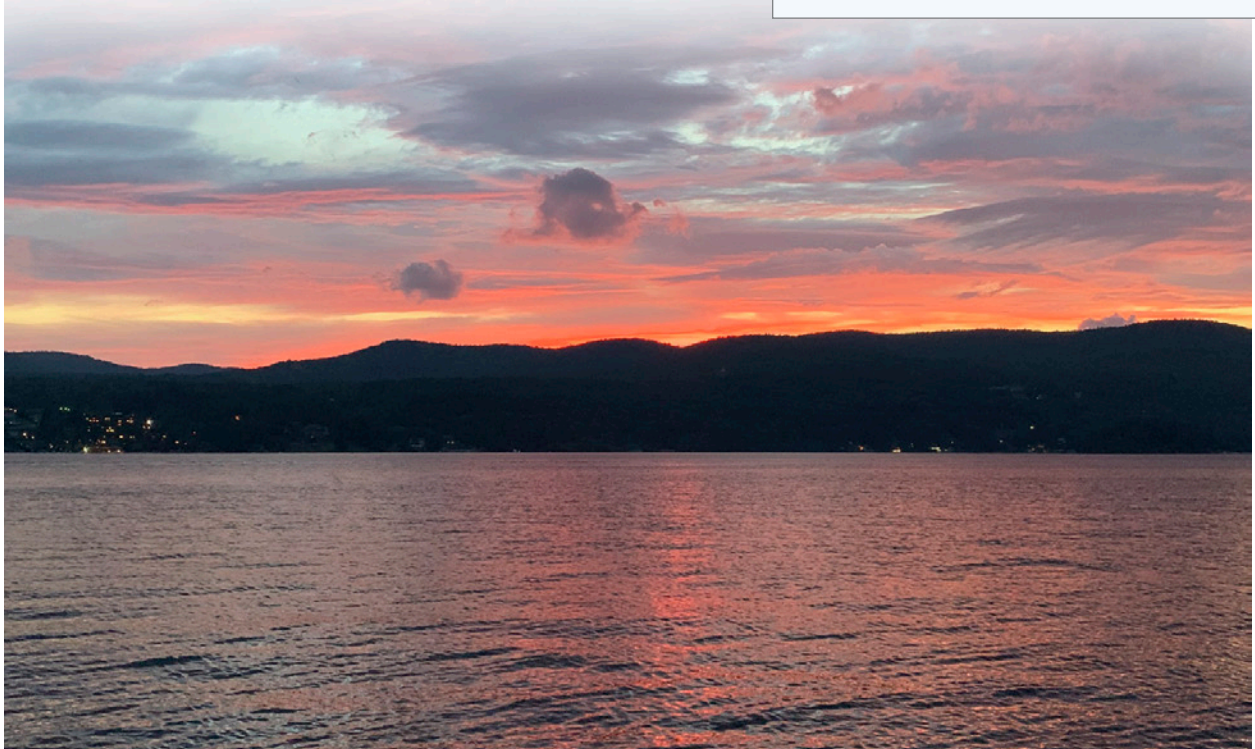
We are able to see beyond what our  
Feeble senses had hours earlier  
Deemed as fact.

The immensity of what *is*  
Only highlights our own smallness.

In the sunlight we are bold and self-assured,  
But in the star-lit darkness,  
The wise must put their trust in God...  
...And he will show us a deeper truth.

July 19, 2020 🌐

*Poem and photo by **Mary Susan Burnett** who is in our Diaspora Group. She is a high school science teacher. Mary's father's family immigrated from Scotland before the Paulists arrived at Lake George. (Read of her unique connection to us in the [August 2020 Associates Newsletter](#)) The photo was taken at Lake George (Plum Bay to be specific) at sunset. The Burnett family house is about 1/4 mile north of St. Mary's on the Lake, the historic summer home of the Paulist Fathers, so it is a similar view to that from the Paulist's dock.*



## *Contemplative sages provide inspiration for reflection*

**Kathy Ward** is a Boston Associate, a deep thinker, a renowned baker, a former teacher, a collector of and sharer spiritual wisdom and, in emulation of Isaac Hecker, an earnest and fervent seeker. She presents these words of people who have influenced her contemplation.



**Kathy Ward**

### *A Prayer for Lent*

O Great Love,  
Heart of my heart.  
Lead me into this Lenten Season.  
Lead me into You,  
into the Silence.  
And in that silence  
Help me to deconstruct,  
To face the brokenness, the woundedness, the shame  
all that keeps me from you.  
May I learn to embrace it in Your Love,  
To embrace all that I am,  
all that You created me to be.  
Falling into Your Mercy, Your Love, Your Grace,  
Falling into You,  
Into Wholeness.  
Then send me out into the world  
bearing Your Light more clearly,  
bearing Your Love more deeply,  
bringing Your Love and Your Light into a hungry and hurting world.  
Amen.

— Mary Sue Babb. (Posted originally to *The Spiritual Practice of Lent.*)

“No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great.”

— John Chrysostom



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“Ash Wednesday is full of joy... The source of all sorrow is the illusion that of ourselves we are anything but dust.”

—*Father Thomas Merton*

“Self-denial means knowing only Christ, and no longer oneself. It means seeing only Christ, who goes ahead of us, and no longer the path that is too difficult for us ... Self-denial is saying only: He goes ahead of us; hold fast to him.”

—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Dear God,  
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists!  
Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?  
Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands?  
Please help me to gradually open my hands  
and to discover that I am not what I own,  
but what you want to give me.

— *Henri J.M. Nouwen*

**Ashes during Covid:** Distribution of Ashes at the University Catholic Center at UCLA,  
Fr. Jamie Baca, C.S.P. and students.



## *Tell us about your life as an Associate.*

An article in this issue referred to this quote from the Paulist Associates Handbook:

“Paulist Associates find opportunities in their daily lives, through their various vocations, to exemplify the mission commitments of the Paulists in the charism of Fr. Isaac Hecker. His charism specified that, in modern American/Canadian culture, the Holy Spirit was at work, making it conducive to invite people to faith, and helping the Church understand its role in modern, democratic societies. His charism was marked by openness to others and a particular welcome to outsiders.”

In the months ahead, we'd like to ask you to share ways in which you live that model in your daily lives, in your families, in your parishes or schools...any way that you bring the Paulist charism to the wider world.

Submissions of any length are welcome. And pictures are a great addition.

Email them to Denis Hurley at [dhpc18@gmail.com](mailto:dhpc18@gmail.com) — Thank you. 🌐

*– Denis Hurley, Editor.*

## **Paulist Associate News**

*by Mike Kallock, CSP Director of the Paulist Associates*

We continue to get positive, affirming reactions to our Virtual Gathering on January 24th. The Board will be meeting soon with our Coordinators on how we can build on this virtual format even when life returns to “normal.”

We are especially cognizant of engaging our Rome associates who are eager to have more contact with us. The distance and time zone, of course, presents a major obstacle. Had we, for instance, had our Virtual Gathering a few hours earlier than 5PM EST, they would have been able to join us. Rome is 6 hours ahead of the East Coast.

We will also be discussing with our coordinators our monthly newsletter programs. With this issue we will have completed all the monthly programs on our Paulist Patrons. It is on St. Patrick, presented by our Roman Associates!



## Proposed Program for March:

## **St. Patrick of Ireland**

*Submitted by the Paulist Associates of Rome Italy*

Saint Patrick of Ireland

Lived in the 5th century, died 17 March 493 AD (est.)

Feast Day is 17 March (St. Patrick's Day)

Never canonized as the process for formal canonization came about in the 12th century

**Theme:** Humility, Courage in Adversity

### **Opening Prayer:**

#### **The Shield of St. Patrick**

I arise today, Through the strength of heaven;  
Light of the sun, Splendor of fire,  
Speed of lightning, Swiftmess of the wind,  
Depth of the sea, Stability of the earth,  
Firmness of the 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 hosts to save me Afar and anear,  
Alone or in a multitude.

Christ shield me today, Against wounding  
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 sit down,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in the eye that sees me,  
Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today, Through the mighty strength  
Of the Lord of creation.

Amen.



**St. Patrick of Ireland:** fifth-century Romano-British Christian missionary and bishop in Ireland.

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## Read in advance of meeting:

Details of St. Patrick's life are uncertain. Research places his dates of birth and death between 387 and 493. What seems to be certain is that he was not Irish, but may have been born in what is modern day Scotland, England, or Wales. He was the grandson of Potitus, a priest, and the son of a public official by the name of Calpornius, who was a deacon of the Church. Patrick was already acclaimed a "saint" before the Roman Catholic Church ever created its formal canonization process.

The only documents about St. Patrick are his *Confessio* which contains approximately 200 references to scripture and The Rule of Faith of the Trinity, a creed of the ancient Celtic Church, as well as a letter he wrote to Coroticus. In these, he called himself both Roman and a Briton. At 16, he and a large number of his father's slaves were captured by Irish raiders and sold as slaves in Ireland. He was forced to work as a shepherd, and suffered greatly from hunger and cold. St. Patrick writes that his time in captivity was critical to his spiritual development. He explains that the Lord had mercy on his youth and ignorance, and afforded him the opportunity to be forgiven his sins. While in captivity, he worked as a shepherd and strengthened his relationship with God through prayer, eventually leading him to convert to Christianity. After six years of captivity he heard a voice telling him that he would soon go home, and that his ship was ready. Fleeing, he travelled to a port, two hundred miles away, where he found a ship and with difficulty persuaded the captain to take him. After three days' sailing, they landed, presumably in Britain, and left the ship, walking for 28 days in the wilderness. Famished, St. Patrick urged his companions to put their faith in God and pray for sustenance, and shortly after they encountered a herd of wild boar. He managed to return home to his family in Britain, where he continued to study Christianity. He also travelled to Auxerre, France, where he was eventually ordained to priesthood by Saint Germanus, a bishop of the Western Church.



Patrick recounts that he had a vision a few years after returning home:

*I saw a man coming, as it were from Ireland. His name was Victoricus, and he carried many letters, and he gave me one of them. I read the heading: "The Voice of the Irish". As I began the letter, I imagined in that moment that I heard the voice of those very people who were near the wood of Foclut, which is beside the western sea—and they cried out, as with one voice: "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us."*

He understood the vision to be a call to do mission work in pagan Ireland. Despite opposition from those who felt his education had been defective, he was sent to carry out the task. He went back to Ireland as a Christian missionary, to the west and north, where the faith had never been preached, obtained the protection of local kings and made numerous converts. In those times, Ireland was largely pagan, and in his *Confession* he writes that he baptised thousands of people, ordained priests to lead the new communities, converted wealthy women, some of whom became nuns in the face of family opposition, and also converted the sons of kings.

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Legends about St. Patrick abound. St. Patrick could never have driven out snakes from Ireland because such reptiles have never inhabited the land. Perhaps the story is an allegory for evil, or a metaphor for how his Christianizing influence eradicated pagan practices. The truth is best served by seeing two solid qualities in him: he was humble and courageous. The determination to accept suffering and success with equal indifference guided the life of God's instrument for winning most of Ireland for Christ. In a relatively short time, the island of Ireland had experienced deeply the Christian spirit, and was prepared to send out missionaries whose efforts were greatly responsible for Christianizing Europe. What distinguishes Patrick is the durability of his efforts. When one considers the pagan state of Ireland when he began, the vast extent of his labors and how the seeds he planted continued to grow and flourish, one can only admire the kind of man St. Patrick must have been.

The Feast Day of Saint Patrick is celebrated on March 17, popularly known as St. Patrick's Day. The day became a feast day in the Catholic Church due to the influence of the Waterford-born Franciscan scholar Luke Wadding, as a member of the commission for the reform of the Breviary in the early part of the seventeenth century. For most of Christianity's first thousand years, canonizations were done on the diocesan or regional level. Relatively soon after the deaths of people considered very holy, the local Church affirmed that they could be liturgically celebrated as saints. While he has never been formally canonized by a Pope, nevertheless, various Christian churches have declared that he is a Saint in Heaven. He is still widely venerated in Ireland and elsewhere today.

The Shield of St. Patrick ("St. Patrick's Prayer") may not have actually been written by him. There are a variety of versions, some omitting the middle section, others using that section alone. We have included a commonly used version for our Opening Prayer. It contains all of the verses normally associated with "the Shield" of St. Patrick, also called "the breastplate."

## St. Patrick's Church in Rome

The new home for Catholic Americans in Rome Italy, is St. Patrick's Church. The church's foundation stone was laid in 1888 and was completed and opened on St. Patrick's Day in 1911. The mosaic which dominates the sanctuary and the church depicts St. Patrick converting the High King Laoghaire at Tara, using the shamrock to explain the Trinity. The gold banner inscription "Ut

Christiani Ita et Romani Sitis" ("Be ye Christians as those of the Roman Church") – is a quote taken from the writings of St. Patrick. On the left hand side is the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament with a smaller mosaic depicting the Last Supper. On the right hand side is the chapel dedicated to our Lady, with a 15th century painting depicting our Lady of Grace.

In 1922 the American Parish of Rome was established at the Church of Santa





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Susanna not far from St. Patrick's, until the Church of Santa Susanna closed on 2013. For four years after that, the American community celebrated Masses, Weddings, First Communion, Confirmations, Baptisms and Funerals at four neighboring churches. During this period, the Irish Augustinians had decided to leave Rome and discontinue their ministry at St. Patrick's Church. They own the Church (and still do) and the surrounding properties but were unsure of what to do with the Church when they were no longer in Rome.

Through the great generosity and hospitality of the Augustinians, the Paulist Fathers were able to lease St. Patrick's Church, and on August 1, 2017, the St. Patrick's Catholic American Community of Rome came into being, almost 129 years after August 2, 1844, the day Fr. Isaac Hecker was baptized to Catholicism at the original St. Patrick's Cathedral in lower Manhattan. We think that the fact that St. Patrick was a Missionary had inspired Fr. Hecker to include him among our special patron saints. St. Patrick's mission had a rather single focus to preach and evangelize one unique group, the Irish people. Similarly, Fr. Hecker was focused on the people of North America alone, because he saw potential for what God might do.

St. Patrick's Church is special to Rome's Paulist Associates because one of its long-time associates, Patricia McCormick, is a cousin of one of the recent Irish rectors in St. Patrick's, Fr. Gabriel McDonagh OSA. 🌍

## Discussion Questions to Share in Your Group:

1. In these times, all of us share uncertainties, worries, perhaps even sad moments. We are deep into the pandemic and feeling vulnerable, vulnerable to the coronavirus, worn thin by events, isolated and longing for warmth, frightened by all that we don't know. This must be what St. Patrick felt when he was wrenched from the comfort of his home at 16. What lessons can we draw upon in St. Patrick's life, and the resilience and solidity of his belief in Jesus Christ and the Trinity in the face of adversity?
2. St. Patrick was humble, suffered hunger and cold, became close to God by being a shepherd, and never gave up. What example or inspiration does the life of St. Patrick offer those who live 1,500 years later, now in this 21st Century?
3. Fr. Isaac Hecker and the early Paulists saw themselves as missionaries and travelled widely to evangelize, introducing people to Catholicism and encouraging others back to the Church, an



*St. Patrick's Church / Chiesa di San Patrizio, Rome.*

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advocacy that the Paulists do to this day. In what ways is the mission of the Paulists similar to St. Patrick's? In what ways can Paulist Associates help in this mission?

4. St. Patrick describes a wonderful image of the relationship of the Trinity. The three leaves of the shamrock plant are part of the one entity, yet each is separate. They are together, yet individual, just as we believe the Trinity to be. What teachings can we draw upon during this Lenten season in applying the power of the Trinity towards healing our own human relationships and strengthening our interactions with one another?

## News/Announcements/Prayers for Others:

The March Program on St. Patrick is by our Rome Associates. The St. Patrick program completes our 15 programs of our Paulist Patrons.

## Closing Prayer:

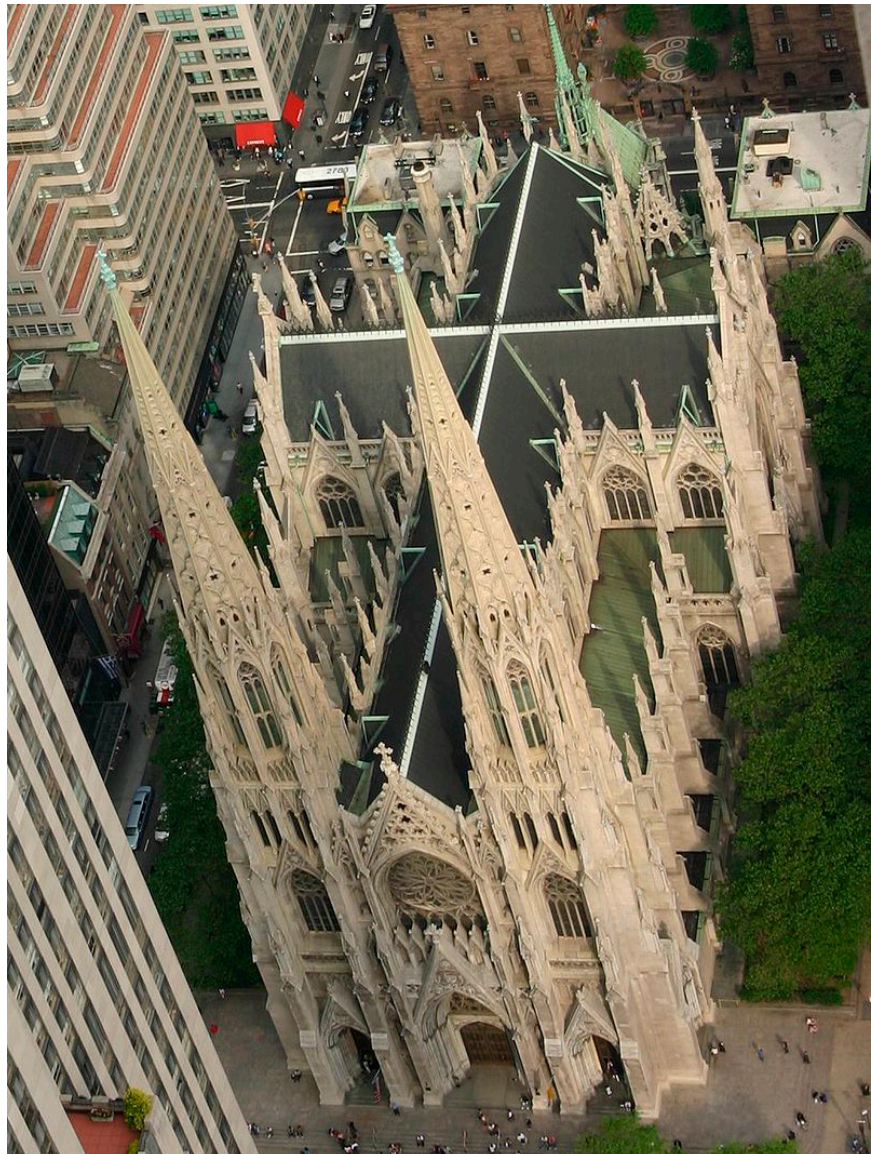
### Prayer of St. Patrick

May the Strength of God pilot us.  
May the Power of God preserve us.  
May the Wisdom of God instruct us.  
May the Hand of God protect us.  
May the Way of God direct us.  
May the Shield of God defend us.  
May the Host of God guard us

Against the snares of the evil ones,  
Against temptations of the world.  
May Christ be with us!  
May Christ be before us!  
May Christ be in us,  
Christ be over all!

May Thy Salvation, Lord,  
Always be ours,  
This day, O Lord, and evermore.

Amen.



*St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City: as seen from Rockefeller Center. Photo credit: J.M. Luijt, cropped by MathKnight—this file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license.*



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<http://www.paulist.org/associates/paulist-associates>

### FIND US ON FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/paulistassociates/>

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## PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER ISAAC T. HECKER, SERVANT OF GOD

Heavenly Father, you called your servant Isaac Thomas Hecker to preach the Gospel to the people of North America and through his teaching, to know the peace and the power of your indwelling Spirit. He walked in the footsteps of Saint Paul the Apostle, and like Paul spoke your Word with a zeal for souls and a burning love for all who came to him in need.



Look upon us this day, with compassion and hope. Hear our prayer. We ask that through the intercession of Father Hecker your servant, you might grant us (state the request).

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

When you pray this prayer, and if you believe that you have received any favors through Hecker's intercession, please contact the Office of the Cause for Canonization of Servant of God, Isaac Hecker at [heckercause@paulist.org](mailto:heckercause@paulist.org). Visit the web site: <http://www.isaachecker.org/> to learn more about his life and the cause for his canonization.

## PAULIST ASSOCIATES PROMISE

*I believe that I am drawn by the Holy Spirit to the spirituality and qualities of the Paulist Community.*

*I have discerned both by prayer and study that God calls me to become associated with the Paulists.*

*I promise that I will pray for the works of the Paulist Society, meet with others, who are also members of the Paulist Associates, for spiritual sharing and formation; and I seek to embody the apostolic qualities of the Paulists in my daily life.*

*Attentive to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the example of St. Paul and the charism of Father Isaac Hecker, I commit myself for one year of membership in the Paulist Associates.*