

June
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June 15, 2014

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

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St. Patrick's Breastplate



I bind unto myself today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same
The Three in One and One in Three.

I bind this today to me forever
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;
His baptism in 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.

I bind unto myself the power
Of the great love of cherubim;
The sweet 'Well done' in judgment hour,
The service of the seraphim,
Confessors' faith, Apostles' word,
The Patriarchs' prayers, the prophets' scrolls,
All good deeds done unto the Lord
And purity of virgin souls.

I bind unto myself today
The virtues of the star lit 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.

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.

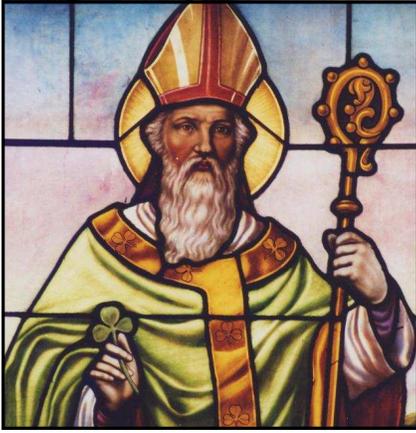
Against the demon snares of sin,
The vice that gives temptation force,
The natural lusts that war within,
The hostile men that mar my course;
Or few or many, far or nigh,
In every place and in all hours,
Against their fierce hostility
I bind to me these holy powers.

Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry,
Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death wound and the burning,
The choking wave, the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.

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.

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.
By Whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord





Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

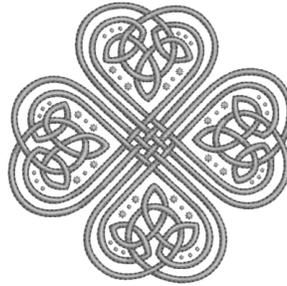
I have included above a lorica. Lorica is a Latin word meaning “breastplate.” This prayer is called St. Patrick’s Lorica or St. Patrick’s Breastplate. The lorica is a form or kind of prayer and St. Patrick’s Lorica is probably the best known of all the loricas. This tradition of prayer was very strong in ancient Ireland. Since Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, this prayer was attributed to him out of reverence. Whether Patrick himself prayed this exact prayer is unknown, but it is quite likely he at least prayed one very similar to it and in the same spirit.

This prayer serves as the basis for LSB 604, *I Bind unto Myself Today*. We sang it on March 16 of this year when we sang a number of hymns with Irish tunes in recognition of St. Patrick’s Day. We will sing this hymn again on June 15, Trinity Sunday, since it is a beautiful and powerful confession of the Holy Trinity.

It has come to my attention that some of our members were troubled by the words in the refrain: “I bind unto myself today,” which they viewed as synergistic or espousing decision theology. This type of theology, which is widespread among American evangelicals, is wrong in that it claims that we sinners make some contribution to our salvation. The Bible teaches just the opposite as St. Paul stated in Ephesians 2:8-9: **By grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast.** From this and other verses from Scripture we can see that God and God alone is responsible for our salvation.

I believe that if you read the whole of St. Patrick’s Breastplate, you will see that this it is clearly not synergistic. Particularly this portion:

Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.
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,



Although we Lutherans are rightly leery of too much use of the word “I” in our worship, it is not always heretical to do so. With the understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who has worked the miracle of faith in Christ in my unbelieving heart, it is not heresy to say that, “I believe in God the Father Almighty,” or “I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving,” or “I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity.”

God the Holy Spirit, You brought us to faith in Jesus Christ through the means of grace (the Word and the Sacraments), enable each of us to always boldly bind ourselves to, confess to, and pray to the Holy Trinity as did St. Patrick, Martin Luther, and all the saints before and since.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton

