



# Danny's Celtic Kids

*"Celtic lands are where strange tales begin and happy endings are possible!"*

Newsletter Issue 13

March 2007

## Danny's Corner



Hello, everyone!

As you know, Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, and his feast day is celebrated yearly on the 17th of March. There are so many myths and legends surrounding the life of St. Patrick. I want to share with you one of my favorite stories of his life.

Patrick lived in a land across the sea and was a happy little boy. One day a long boat landed at the seashore. It carried cruel men who were searching for slaves. They captured Patrick and took him back across the sea to Ireland where they sold Patrick as a slave to a man called Milchu.

Milchu forced Patrick to work for him minding his sheep and pigs high up on Mount Slemish in County Antrim. Patrick was cold, hungry and missed his family. He spent seven long years tending the animals up on Mount Slemish all the while praying for God to help him escape. He promised God that if he escaped from Ireland, he would become a priest.

One night, a voice came to Patrick in his dreams. The voice told Patrick to go to the seashore. Patrick ran away to the sea. When he got to the seashore, he saw a boat getting ready to sail. He climbed on board the boat and hid under a sack. The boat sailed across the sea and landed near to Patrick's family home. His mother and father were very glad to see him safe.

True to his word, Patrick began to study for the priesthood. Years later, when Patrick had become a bishop, he again heard voices in his dreams. This time, though, the voices were many and they were calling Patrick back to Ireland. They asked him to return to Ireland and walk once more among the people and show them a better way of life. Patrick took this as a sign that God wanted him to go back to Ireland. This time, he was not afraid.

He returned to Ireland and taught the people about the one true God and about Christianity. That is why he is the beloved patron saint of Ireland,



### A Traditional Irish Blessing

May joy and peace surround you,  
Contentment latch your door,  
And Happiness be with you now  
And bless you evermore.



## Croagh Patrick

Croagh Patrick is a famous mountain in the west of Ireland. It is 5 miles outside the town of Westport, County Mayo. It overlooks Clew Bay and its 365 islands (one for every day of the year). The local people call the mountain “the Reek”. The mountain stands on the edge of a valley that was created in the last Ice Age by a glacier flowing into Clew Bay. The mountain derives its name from the Irish Cruach Phádraig, *Saint Patrick's mountain*.



Myth says that Croagh Patrick is where the patron saint of Ireland, Saint Patrick, chose to follow in the footsteps of Moses and Jesus by fasting for 40 days. Later, he built a church at the very top of the mountain. A modern little chapel now stands in its place.

### The Boheh Stone and the “Rolling Sun”

There is a large rock east of Croagh Patrick known locally as “Saint Patrick's Chair”. It is one of the finest examples of Neolithic rock art in Ireland. The carvings date back to the Stone Age, about 5500 years ago.



An amazing natural phenomenon happens on April 18th and on August 24th. If you are on the Boheh Stone and look at Croagh Patrick as the sun is setting, it looks like the sun sets on the top of the mountain, but instead of disappearing behind the mountain as it continues to move lower in the sky, the sun



moves down along the slope of the mountain. This makes it look just like the sun is rolling down the mountain.



### **In Ancient Times**

The mountain was a holy sight long before the arrival of Saint Patrick. All the way back in ancient times the mountain had its own protective god who lived near the mountain. His name was Crom Cruach.

Some people believe that the importance of the mountain is due to the Celtic festival of Lughnasa. The god, Lugh, was the all-father god, the sky god, of the Celts. Lugh started a harvest festival. Now, the festival of Lughnasa is celebrated on the first day of August.

### **Saint Patrick**

Today, the mountain is best known for its association with Ireland's patron saint, Patrick. It has borne the name of "Saint Patrick's mountain" for 1200 years.

Every year on the last Sunday in July over 25,000 people climb the mountain to honor Saint Patrick and to pray. It was once the tradition for the people to climb up the mountain in their bare feet in the dark of the night. Today, most people wear their shoes, although some go in bare feet, but they climb during the day. It was just too dangerous to climb in the dark.



**The Ardagh Chalice**

## Celtic Art

The word “Celtic” can stand for a great number of different things, but when used in “decorative” terms, it refers to the great flowering of interlacing art forms used by the Celtic people to decorate and embellish a large and varied range of artifacts.

Luckily for us, great amounts of Celtic art have survived. These are represented in the forms of highly pictorial, illuminated books or manuscripts, fine gold jewelry, and in the mighty stone high crosses.

The Celtic craftsmen excelled at this new art form. They were undisputed masters of ornamentation. They weren't just interested in the decorations themselves, but also had great respect for the shape of the object and for the material from which the object was made. So, all the decorating they did made each piece special and unique.

Celtic images are very complex in their design and involve complex symbolism. The Celtic craftsmen were inspired largely by Biblical references: doves, lambs, and holy figures. But, they also produced strange and puzzling figures and creatures with intricate interlacing limbs and bodies. They tried to avoid using straight lines and only occasionally made their illustrations symmetrical.





## The Book of Kells

The most famous decorated manuscript in the Celtic style is *The Book of Kells*, which has been described as the most beautiful book in the world. It is a wonderful example of Celtic art in the Middle Ages.

What makes *The Book of Kells* particularly special is not the wonderful full-page illuminations (see the pictures below), but the beautiful ornamentation of all but one of the 680 pages in the book.

In the 1660's, *The Book of Kells* was given to Trinity College in Dublin, and is on permanent display in the Long Room of the Old Library.



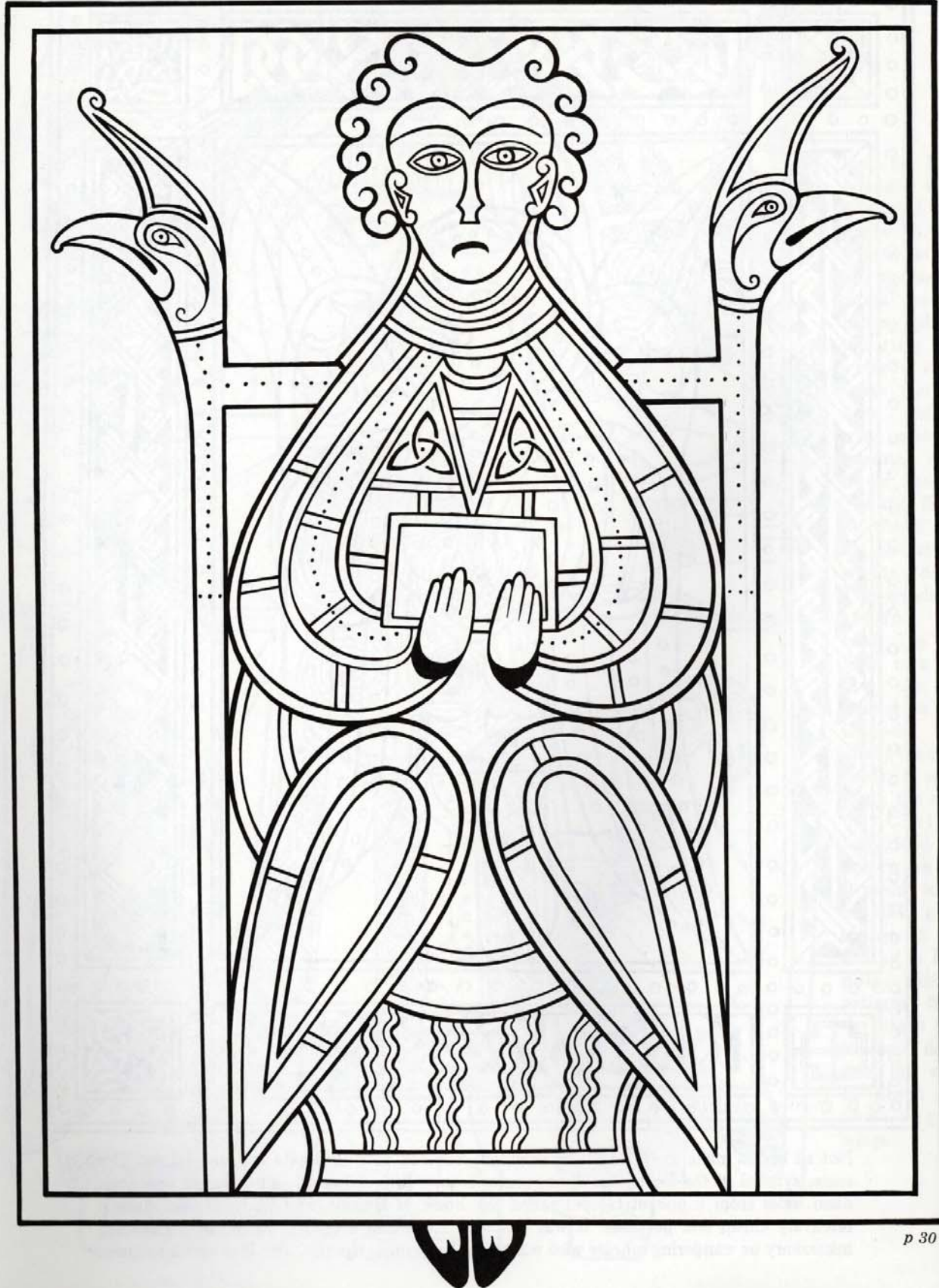
“Four Evangelists”  
from *The Book of Kells*



“Eight Ring Cross”  
from *The Book of Kells*



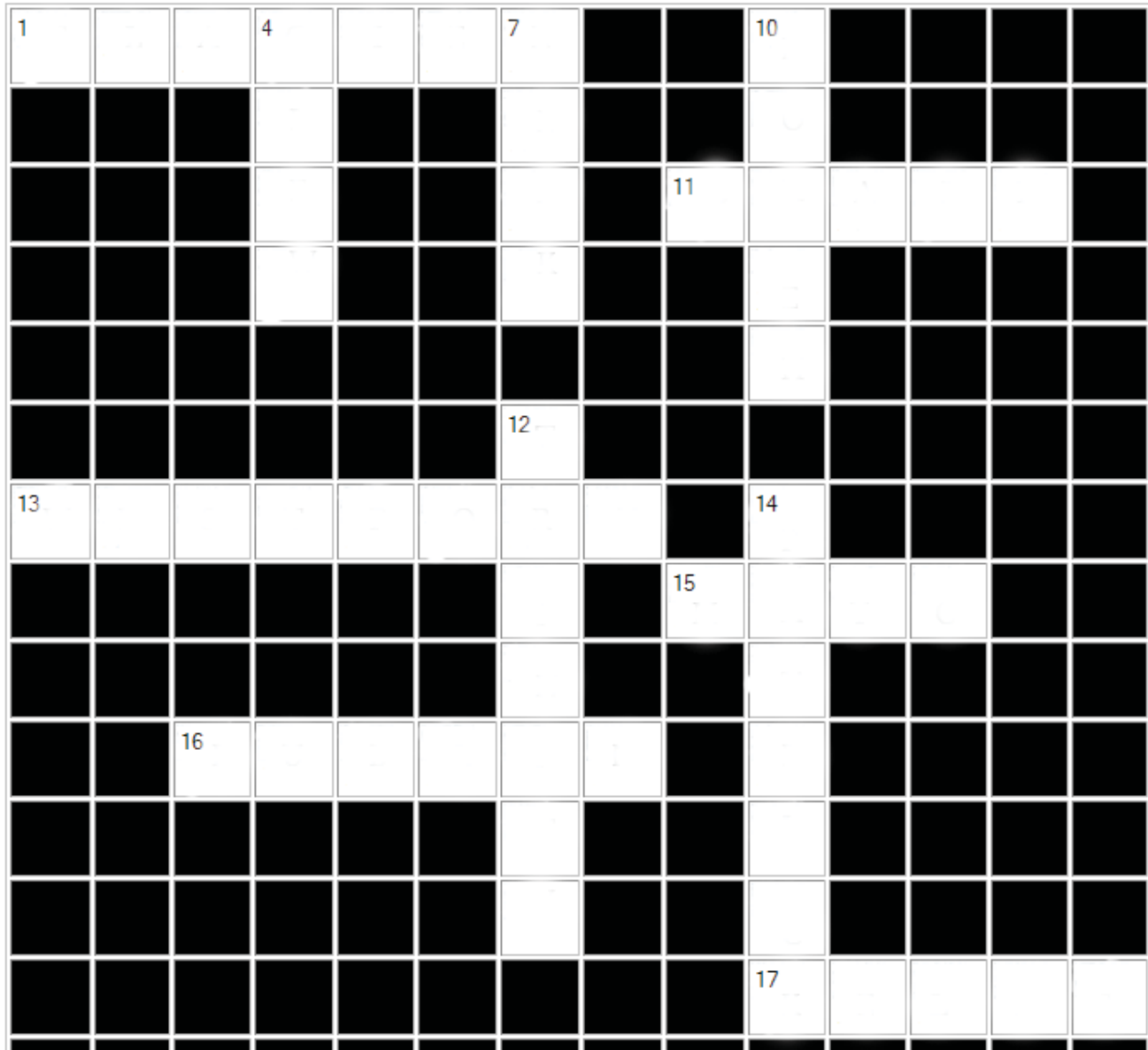
A picture for you to color.



Portrait of St. Mark  
from *The Book of Dimma*



Try this puzzle.



**Across:**

- 1. The Croagh Patrick valley was created by a \_\_\_\_.
- 11. The Boheh stone is known as "St. Patrick's \_\_\_\_".
- 13. Croagh Patrick is 5 miles outside the town of \_\_\_\_.
- 15. The town of Westport is in the County of \_\_\_\_.
- 16. Trinity College is in the city of \_\_\_\_.
- 17. The most famous decorated manuscript is the Book of \_\_\_\_.

**Down:**

- 4. Westport is located on \_\_\_ Bay.
- 7. The local people call Croagh Patrick "the \_\_\_".
- 10. The \_\_\_ Stone is located east of Croagh Patrick.
- 12. The Book of Kells is on display at \_\_\_ College.
- 14. The patron saint of Ireland is Saint \_\_\_\_.



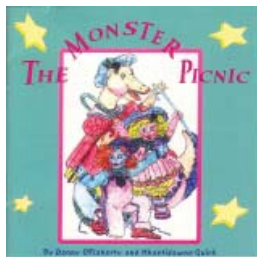
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