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- *Vita Sancti Paternus* -  
The Life of St. Padarn



*Here begins the life of Saint Padarn, bishop.*

I

Christ, the son of the living God, the third Person of the divine Trinity, coeternal and consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, gave this precept to the Church, that he might incite the minds of men with greater zeal to religion, promising them a double reward, that is, here a hundredfold, and hereafter life eternal. And Luke the evangelist, the disciple of saint Paul the apostle, a physician of body and soul, wrote this precept for the common salvation of Christians. The purport of this precept is of such a kind. He who to obtain the kingdom of God shall despise all desires, and shall tread under foot all the riches of the world and luxuries, shall receive far more in the present time, as from the brethren and comrades of his prior, who are bound to him in a spiritual tie. A far more gracious love also shall he receive in this life, seeing that it is agreed that that love which, whether the social bond or the necessity of blood relationship joins together as between parents and children and brethren and wives and neighbours, is sufficiently brief and fragile. Who, therefore, for the kingdom of God spurn temporal things, do even in this life by sure faith taste the joys of that same kingdom, and in the expectation of the heavenly country do enjoy the most sincere love equally with all the elect.

2

Of whom is saint Padarn, bishop, who abandoning an earthly inheritance and seeing complete exile, desired to become heir of the heavenly kingdom and citizen. Who by race was an Armorican, and was born of noble parents, to wit, from Petran, his father, and Guean, his mother. These availing themselves of one connexion begot saint Padarn. But afterwards they

dedicated themselves in service to the eternal God. For Petran straightway leaving Letavia went to Ireland. Gracious, therefore, was the birth of saint Padarn, whereby his father was made a saint, and his mother, made a handmaid of Christ, led a religious life for ever. Therefore it was foreseen by God in harmonious sequence that as Christ was sprung from the supreme Father, God of God, Light of Light, so saint Padarn was born of holy parents. For straightway that he was born, they elected to follow Christ.

### 3

But Padarn soon as he understood anything rational in the world, asks his mother, with whom he had been left, whom he had had as father, whether he lived or not, or, if he lived, where he was, and why he tarried elsewhere, and had not rather remained in his own inheritance. To which his mother replies with tears, 'Thy father indeed liveth, and more to God than to the world. But he has gone hence to Ireland, where he fasts, prays, watches, meditates, mourns, sleeps on a little mat, and kneels to the supreme Lord day and night.' Then the youth, the Holy Ghost from above inspiring, strengthened, says 'How better then can a son live than in imitation of a good father? For if the father be a king, his son seeks to imitate him in government. Therefore may I die, if I follow not my father in the paths which he chose.'

### 4

At that time an ecclesiastical company of monks, leaving Letavia, were bent on seeking the shores of Britannia. For even as a winter hive, when spring is smiling, waking to life, and, its stock increasing, prudently considering, sends out another first and principal swarm to make honey elsewhere, so Letavia, the serenity of religion increasing, sends across crowds of saints to the source, whence they went forth, under the leaders Ketinlau, Catman, and Titechon.

### 5

The holy youth, Padarn, also, stirred by this report, girded himself with the rest for exile, not slower than his seniors, but,

by as much as he was younger, so much the more fervent in labouring, he transcended his age in religious rules.

## 6

Therefore all the companies assemble for the passage, with one accord seeking Britannia. Soon is Padarn made the fourth leader of a troop, not at his own request, but his cousins, seeing him hastening to the height of perfection, appointed him, saying, 'Since the Lord has made thee to excel in morals, it behoves that thou shouldest rule over peoples for example of life'.

## 7

Therefore with a favourable passage all the clerics land on the shores of the island of the Britanni. There follow Padarn eight hundred and forty-seven monks. The saint with his saints takes a place for a church, by name Mauritana, where saint Padarn afterwards shone by reason of a distinguished miracle. And so he there soon built a monastery.

## 8

After that he had built a church, and placed the monastery under a steward and prior and dean, he remembers his father. He blesses the brethren, he obtains their leave, he sails to Ireland, he visits his father. They salute one another, they give thanks to Christ, the most high God, at length they sit together.

## 9

At that time in Ireland the kings of two provinces are at variance. Devastations spring from both sides, spoils are seized, houses are burnt, wars spring up, brothers fall, the land is made desolate unto slaughter and solitude.

## 10

At last the pitiful Arbiter of the world with wonted providence taking compassion, sends an occasion of unhopd-for peace to the bishop of the church of every monastery through his angel. And he says, 'Unless both armies have seen the face of the saint lately come from Britannia, never will the malicious kings be

reconciled to one another.' Immediately messengers are sent. They appeal with respect to Padarn. The armies are summoned together. They place Padarn in the midst. By the grace of his countenance the devils of discord are driven away. Perpetual peace springs up between both provinces, eternal unity is born from God, so that as a sign of the unity of the men the woods of one province fall on the falling of the woods of the other province.

## 11

Then all magnify the Lord in his servant, Padarn, and all blessing him, said, 'May there always be to thee a token of peace, whereby thy name may shine on the earth, while thou livest, also after thy death.' Which is fulfilled in the gift, Cirguen, Cyrwen. For so great is the service of that bachall, that, if any two are at discord, they are made to agree by swearing together on it.

## 12

Of Christ it is said, that a good shepherd knows which are his sheep, in accordance with which precept saint Padarn brings back to memory the brethren whom he had left in Britannia. He bids farewell to his father, he is blessed by his father, he goes to Britannia, he finds the brethren safe in body and mind.

## 13

Among whom he finds Nimannauc lately arrived, who in Letavia unable to live after Padarn, comes to the shore of the sea, and finds a certain rock, on which he stood and said, If to the Lord God what things I design are pleasing, and if that Padarn, whom I would follow, is indeed a saint, let the rock rise, and let it float on the waters, let the waves be made solid, let the sea harden that it drowns not the stone, may I be borne in safety to the master, the leader saint Padarn.' Sooner than said, he arrived by a wonderful voyage at the Maritime Church on the shores of Britannia. He is saluted by the brethren, he tells his story, they all with one voice magnify the Lord God in his saints, who fulfilled the humble desire of Nimannauc, and manifested the virtue of his most exalted saint, that is, Padarn.

## 14

Then Padarn built monasteries and churches throughout the whole Ceredigion country, over which he appointed leaders, to wit, Samson, Guinnus, Guippir, Nimannauc. And so saint Padarn became a light in doctrine and practice throughout the whole of Britannia.

## 15

In the meantime Maelgwn, king of the Northern Britons on a journey to the Southern Britons to vanquish and subdue them, comes with a strong army as far as the mouth of the river Clarach. And when he, ever the tempter of the saints, was at hand, he ordered two heralds to precede him, that they might try Padarn in some wicked way. They were called Graban and Terillan.

## 16

They, wickedly scheming, came to the descent of Clarach, they fill up bags with moss and gravel, they feign them to be royal treasures to be brought to the saint. They bid him take care of these until the king returns prosperously. The saint consents, he orders them to be deposited, he says they will be found even as they had been left.

## 17

The king passes on, the heralds follow. The king returns in peace, the Britons being subdued. And he sent the malign heralds to try the saint. Then quickly do they approach his cell, they take up the bags, they empty their contents, they deposit the moss and gravel, they impudently cry out that all the treasures of the king had been taken by stealth, and that gravel and moss had been put in instead of them. The saint on the other hand replies that as put in so they were found. But they began to threaten the ruin of the whole cell, if the treasures were not restored.

## 18

Before these things it had been decreed by the king throughout the whole of Britannia, that every liar should be discovered by means of boiling hot water. Then in the fervour of the spirit

Padarn bids them heat water in a brazen vessel, until it thrice boils over. This is soon done. Immediately Padarn placed his hand in the water at its greatest heat, which when placed in appeared white and cold as snow. Soon the heralds are constrained to put their hands in the water. Soon their scalded hands show the malice of their minds. And the heralds forthwith being entirely burnt, end their life. Their souls in raven-forms fly to the riverbed, which unto this day by the name of one of them is called, to wit, Graban.

## 19

Then King Maelgwn himself is blinded at his post, he is weakened in heart, he totters at the knees. He confesses that he is about to die by reason of the impeachment of his iniquity against saint Padarn. Straightway the king went to Padarn, before whom he bends the knee, he asks pardon. And saint Padarn granted him pardon. That king remunerates him with a quantity of land, that is, from the mouth of the river Rheidiol upwards until it touches at its head the limit of the river Clarach; and along the length of the same river as far as the sea is the limit prolonged. In that hour the king is cured in the eyes, he is quickened in heart, he stands firm on his knees. They withdraw from each other appeased, saint Padarn and the king, whilst God is in Padarn, and Padarn in God, through this miracle.

## 20

Whilst these things are being done, a heavenly messenger comes to saint David in Rosina Vallis, serving Christ God, and says to him, ' Rise and go to Jerusalem, that thou be ordained there. Join to thee two worthy companions, who likewise may be ordained, that is, Padarn and Teilo.' Soon David sent to them. They came without delay. They passed together through barbarous nations, receiving the gift of tongues. For they were men of one language, and were addressing every man in his own language, wherein he had been born. They arrived at length as far as Jerusalem. And there they preach with a preaching the most noble after the apostles. Afterwards by the imposition of the hand of the patriarch these three saints were ordained

bishops. After that they were enriched with gifts. Padarn was enriched with a double gift, to wit, a bachall and a tunic woven throughout. They returned happily. They divided Britannia into their three episcopacies, did not the malice of tyrants afterwards disturb them.

## 21

When Padarn was in his church resting after so much labour at sea, a certain tyrant, Arthur by name, was traversing the regions on either side, who one day came to the cell of saint Padarn the bishop. And while he was addressing Padarn, he looked at the tunic, which he, being pierced with the zeal of avarice, sought for his own. The saint answering said, 'This tunic is not fitting for the habit of any malign person, but for the habit of the clerical office.' He went out of the monastery in a rage. And again he returns in wrath, that he might take away the tunic against the counsels of his own companions. One of the disciples of Padarn seeing him returning in fury, ran to saint Padarn and said, 'The tyrant, who went out from here before, is returning. Reviling, stamping, he levels the ground (beneath) with his feet'. Padarn answers 'Nay rather, may the earth swallow him.' With the word straightway the earth opens the hollow of its depth, and swallows Arthur up to his chin. He immediately acknowledging his guilt begins to praise both God and Padarn, until, while he begs forgiveness, the earth delivered him up. From that place on bent knees he begged the saint for indulgence, whom the saint forgave. And he took Padarn as his continual patron, and so departed.

## 22

In those days Caradog, surnamed Braichfras, extended his kingdom across the boundaries even of Britannia. And coming to Letavia, he took it under his rule. The Armoricans came to him saying, 'Unless thou wilt call out of Britannia for us our countryman Padarn, thou wilt not be able to find us easy to appease.' And Caradog traversing the circuit of his kingdom, came at length as far as that monastery, which at that time saint Padarn was inhabiting. This land, before Padarn came, was

called Campus Heli, but now it is called the metropolis of saint Padarn. For he inhabited those three churches in strict penance for twenty-one years. That is, seven in the maritime, and seven in that middle one by name Again's Cross, where he overcame Graban and Terillan, and the seven last after his episcopate, living to God alone in meditation, he sojourned in that his great church. Caradog, therefore, entreats him with earnest prayers, that he should go at length to Letia for example. And Padarn unwilling according to the apostolical precept to resist an opportunity, consents to go. And he intimates to the king that he should make laws for his churches that should last for ever. Immediately the word of the king follows saying, 'In my time may thy churches be as islands in the great sea. And I say, I, who sit in the chief seat of the kingdom of the Britons, that if any king, or king's son, or leader shall have made this law void, may either his days or his genealogy be shortened, nor let him be numbered on earth, or let him occupy eternal hell.' And all the people answer and the king's army and all the holy disciples of Padarn 'Amen'.

### 23

Saint Padarn, therefore, bidding farewell to his brethren, whom he left here to rule his churches, and comforting them, lest they should fail in their tribulations, but that they should always in everything ask the Lord through him, arrived in Letia, where he bore many things from false brethren. For as soon as he arrived thither, his fame filled the whole of Letia.

### 24

At that time Samson, whom all the Armoricans magnified as chief in sanctity, was traversing the dioceses that the churches of all the Armorican saints might pay tribute to his episcopacy both then and afterwards for ever. It happened that he came down to the neighbourhood of the city of Vannes, by which saint Padarn, bishop, built a monastery.

### 25

Then one of the monks of Samson, malignly watching him, said

to Samson, 'Send to the saint, lately come from Britannia, to test his humility. And bid him by a messenger that in whatever state he might be, when the messenger shall come to him, he hasten to thee in that same state without excuse.' Samson taking the advice innocently, and perceiving no artifice therein, sent the messenger. The messenger without delay came to the saint. He found Padarn clothed with legging and boot on one foot, the other remaining naked. The servant tells his message in his manner. Padarn, foreseeing the future, delayed not. He goes to the council. That malicious monk, the author of the evil plan, laughs at Padarn half clothed about his feet, and he straightway seized by a demon falls on the earth. And soon Samson perceives the reason, that is, that he had been the author of the wicked temptation against saint Padarn. And then he peaceably salutes him, he asks his pardon and Padarn grants it. He heals the tormented man, he drives out the devil, the Lord is honoured in saint Padarn.

## 26

Then too saint Samson ordained that although all the episcopacies of the whole of Letia should render tribute to saint Samson, nevertheless the episcopacy of saint Padarn should be free from every person. And whosoever should make this law void in the churches of saint Padarn and in their possessions in Letia and in Britannia, may he perish by the same curses wherewith king Caradog damned him. And the whole company of the clerics of Letia replies 'Amen, Amen'.

## 27

The city of Vannes is the seat of the episcopacy of saint Padarn, in which Peter, the Apostle, holds one church. For Caradog by command enjoined that, a single hail excepted, the honour of that city should ever be dedicated to saint Padarn, and its name, and fame. After these so great things the saints of the seven episcopacies of the whole of Letia ordained, that they should assemble on one mountain, and confirm their unity to remain for ever. In which synod Padarn, much harassed by invidious and false brethren, confirming his unity with the six principal

saints and he himself being the seventh according to the number of the sevenfold grace, and fearing lest through their intolerance he might be made angry in some, even slight manner, leaving Letia, went to the Franks. And there he fell asleep in the Lord the seventeenth day before the Kalends of the month of May. For the Armoricans celebrate three solemnities of his, that is, that day of the Kalends of November, when he formed perpetual unity with the six chief saints of Letia, and the day of his obit, and the day, on which he received the order of the episcopate, that is, the twelfth before the Kalends of the month of July.

## 28

After the death of saint Padarn a terrible famine invaded Letia. For by the space of three years after his decease neither dew nor rain fell from heaven throughout the whole of Letia. All inquire the cause of the scarcity and such great heat. They discovered at last that saint Padarn, harassed by hurtful and false brethren, had deserted Letia. Entering into counsel, they all proceeded to the place of his burial among the Franks. And they resolve that they honourably transport with them his relics, which thing they were not able to accomplish. For even one of his bones the whole army of them were not able to transport. Therefore they were disturbed, they knew not what to do. At length a certain noble from the city of Vannes intervened and said, 'When saint Padarn was living, he was always asking me for my threshing floor, that he might there lay the foundation of his church. Because, therefore, I bereaved him of his desire, whilst he lived, I will grant this after his death. Therefore let him rise, let him take the honour, let him have his desire.' With the word they lift from the earth the shrine of his relics. Easily even two or one carry it, they come to Letia, with hymns and spiritual songs they honourably bury the relics in the threshing floor of the above-said noble.

## 29

It so happened that, as the temple of Solomon was honourably built to God in the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite, so the Armoricans arranged to build a lovely temple to Christ in the threshing floor of that noble about the relics of saint Padarn.

And another monastery was built among the Franks, where he had been first buried. Therefore in the city of Vannes his relics happily await the day of judgement. His soul rejoices in heaven, in the unity of the nine heavenly orders, in the unity of holy bishops, confessors, and apostles, in the unity excelling every unity, that is, in the unity of the Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Let us, therefore, pray most holy Padarn that, as he lives happily in heaven, so also we through his intercession may dwell in the heavenly realms through infinite ages. Amen.

*Here begins the possession of lands  
of Saint Padarn, bishop.*

30

Whilst then the patriarch of Jerusalem was present, the three southern kingdoms of the Britons succeeded under the three episcopacies of the three saints. The Kingdom of Seisyll, Seisyllwg, received the consecration of churches, and the imposition of ecclesiastical degrees, and confirmation of episcopal baptism, and the chrismal oil, and all episcopal duties from the episcopacy of saint Padarn. The Kingdom of Rhain, Rheinwg, received these aforesaid rights from the episcopacy of saint David. And the Kingdom of Morgan, Morgannwg, received episcopal duties from saint Eiludd, Teilo. Therefore the third episcopal place among the Southern Britons is the monastery of saint Padarn, bishop. How the particular territory of saint Padarn was presented has been told before in the miracle which saint Padarn performed against Maelgwn.

31

Once it fell out, when saint Padarn, the bishop, was inhabiting his monastery, that one of his servants had occasion to visit the woods of the monastery, and he fell among thieves and was killed. As he did not return, the claswyr were uncertain why he delayed. But the cause of his staying was divulged into the ears of the pontiff Padarn. Hearing this, and going to the wood, he

called his servant by his proper name, saying, 'Reply, Reaus, to thy master'. Then the head, torn off from the corpse, replied, 'Here I be, sir.' With which word the bishop came up to the place whence had come the reply, and he saw separated from its body the head of his servant. And, eyes lifted to heaven, he blessed the whole corpse. With the blessing of the blessed man head and body are conjoined, and the servant rose alive. Both gave thanks for Christ's miracle. The fame of his resuscitation came to the satrap, called by the name of Eithir, who, moved by the power of the miracle, approached the bishop, saying, 'Mine are the malicious slayers of thy servant. And lest divine vengeance overtake me by the agitation of thy spirit, I crave pardon. And that I may make thy mind placable towards me, I will dedicate to thee part of my finest land without reclaiming of tribute of any person. That is, from the dyke of Liuluuin between the two streams, that is, Rheidiol and Paith, as far as the shore of the sea.' To whom saint Padarn granted pardon, and foretelling, 'Before that thou finish thy life, thou shalt be acceptable to the Lord, and in the cemetery of this place shalt thou be honourably buried. To thee a solemnity will be celebrated forever by this company.' He it was whose name they call in the vulgar speech, Eithir map Arthat.

