St. Patrick: Apostle of Ireland

By Chaplain Corey Thornton

Here we are mid-March and St. Patrick's Day is upon us. I suspect for many, the holiday is spent wearing green clothes and drinking beer. Some take the celebration further by drinking green beer!

Like many of our holidays, St. Patrick's Day began as a religious holiday and has in recent times taken on a more secular and arguably less meaningful character. Since the early 17th century, St. Patrick's Day has been a holy day of obligation in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. In many places where St. Patrick's Day is celebrated, these roots have never been fully realized and in other places they seem to have faded over time.

In the mid-1990s the Irish government began a campaign to utilize the holiday to showcase Irish culture which seems to have further changed it from a religious to a secular celebration.

Not being of Irish decent, I feel at a disadvantage to fully identify with the celebration of the holiday. In my home town, the one thing you had better be sure to do on St. Patrick's Day is to wear a piece of green clothing; otherwise, you stand the threat of being pinched by your friends.

As a Christian, I do feel close to the religious roots of the holiday and believe that we would do well to remember them as a source of personal and cultural enrichment. Too often we fail to make the effort to do this and end up with a shallow caricature of what was originally intended to be a meaningful celebration.

One way to revitalize St. Patrick's Day is to take a moment to look at the person who bares its name.

St. Patrick was born in Britain in the fourth century. As a teenager he was abducted by Irish raiders and brought to Ireland to be a slave. After six years in slavery, he heard a voice that spoke to him in a dream telling him to escape and travel back to the land of his birth. He heeded that voice, ran away from his master and travelled 200 miles to a ship that sailed him to freedom.

Despite the hardships of slavery, Patrick had developed a devout spiritual life through prayer to the effect that, soon after his return to Britain, he went to France to study for the Christian priesthood. Once he received ordination, he returned to Britain and eventually became a missionary to Ireland. His has long since been regarded as one of the primary forces in the Christianization of Ireland.

To exhibit the bravery to escape slavery is an impressive feat indeed, but what most inspires me about Patrick's life is that he returned to Ireland to share his Christian faith with them. How easy would it have been for him to remain in Britain where he would be free from a life of slavery and live amongst like-minded people? Having been a slave in Ireland, not many would have imagined that he would wish to return there as a missionary.

In this decision, Patrick displayed a virtue valued highly by Christians that we are to love our enemies. In St. Patrick's example we find inspiration to live out this principle. Even for those who have no intention of becoming missionaries, inspiration can still be found in Patrick's willingness to forgive the hurts of the past and to make a positive contribution toward his neighbors, the Irish. His ministry to the Irish had such a profound effect that they made him one of their patron saints.

This St. Patrick's Day, regardless of how you intend to celebrate, let me encourage you to remember the person in which the celebration is named and give a word of thanks for St. Patrick. And as always, if you drink, please drink responsibly.

Road tax collection, decal issuance begins

From CFAY Security

Road tax is paid every spring. Yen payments for regular size cars and trucks can be made at the Kanagawa Tax Office (KTO). Payments for motorcycles and mini-cars can be made at the local city hall or ward office, starting April 1.

KTO representatives will collect road tax at the Community Readiness Center in room 212, March 24, 25 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 - 2:30 p.m. and April 12, 14 and 15 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 - 2:30 p.m. This service includes Ikego residents. Road tax collection for Negishi will be at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation classroom, Bldg. 19045, in Negishi March 29 from 9 – 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 – 2 p.m.

Vehicle owners can obtain the 2011 base decal at the respective Vehicle Registration Office (VRO) after road tax has been paid.

The amount of road tax to be paid depends on the type of vehicle, which can be determined by the number shown on the top of the license plate. The respective tax amount is as follows:

- 40/400Y and 50/500Y plates - 7,500 yen
- 30/300Y plates 4.5L and below - 19,000 yen and 22,000 yen for 4.6L and above
- 11/100Y plates - 32,000 yen

Call VRO at 243-5011/5896 for more information.

Fitness Fair comes to Sullivans School

By Steve Parker,
The Sullivans Elementary School Public Affairs

A fitness fair, organized by the Sullivans Walking Club (SWC), was held for and attended by teachers and staff administrators of The Sullivans Elementary School. Many fitness-related Yokosuka base organizations contributed to the success of the event.

Fitness-related booths were setup for the fair, which included a booth with U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka registered dietician Lt. j.g. Melissa Amescua, providing dietary guideline information and updated dietary tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Key recommendations for this year include reducing daily sodium intake from 2,300 milligrams a day to 1,500 milligrams a day," said Amescua. "Most Americans take in almost 4,000 milligrams a day."

Other booths included blood pressure monitoring manned by school nurses Shawn Bogen and Sandra Pothula, and a body composition analysis by Rhea Daniels and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Katina Jack from USNH Yokosuka Health Promotions Department.

Mayumi Castro's free 10-minute "healing touch" massages were a big hit. Her line formed early and she was massaging the entire afternoon. Castro, a certified massage therapist, specializing in traditional therapeutic Thai and other massages, offers massage services at the George I. Purdy Fitness Center.

Chris Mitchell, from Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Fitness, brought several giveaway items and a real treat for Sullivans teachers; Kimberly Johnson and Ayako Ware.

Johnson and Ware are two personal fitness trainers certified by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America, who electrified their audience with a live resistance training session, demonstrating the use of resistance bands and the Reebok Core Board. Johnson and Ware are also available by appointment through the fitness center.

As the hands on the clock moved towards 3 p.m., a distinct change in the atmosphere of the room was noted. An air of hushed anticipation enveloped the audience, finally breaking loose when Shellanie Ferrer and Reiko McCullough set the stage on fire with a Zumba routine that was hot, hot, hot! Every foot in the room was tapping as these two dynamic, fiery instructors presented their spicy Latin-infused Zumba exercise class for one and all. Ferrer and McCullough are group X and Zumba certified instructors who also teach classes through MWR.

The Sullivans Walking Club hosted the health and fitness fair, and thanks to the hard work and generosity of several fitness related organizations at Yokosuka Base who brought their all to the event, it was a tremendous success. A big Sullivans "thank you" goes out to everyone who participated.