PER TUA INFORMAZIONE
(FOR YOUR INFORMATION)

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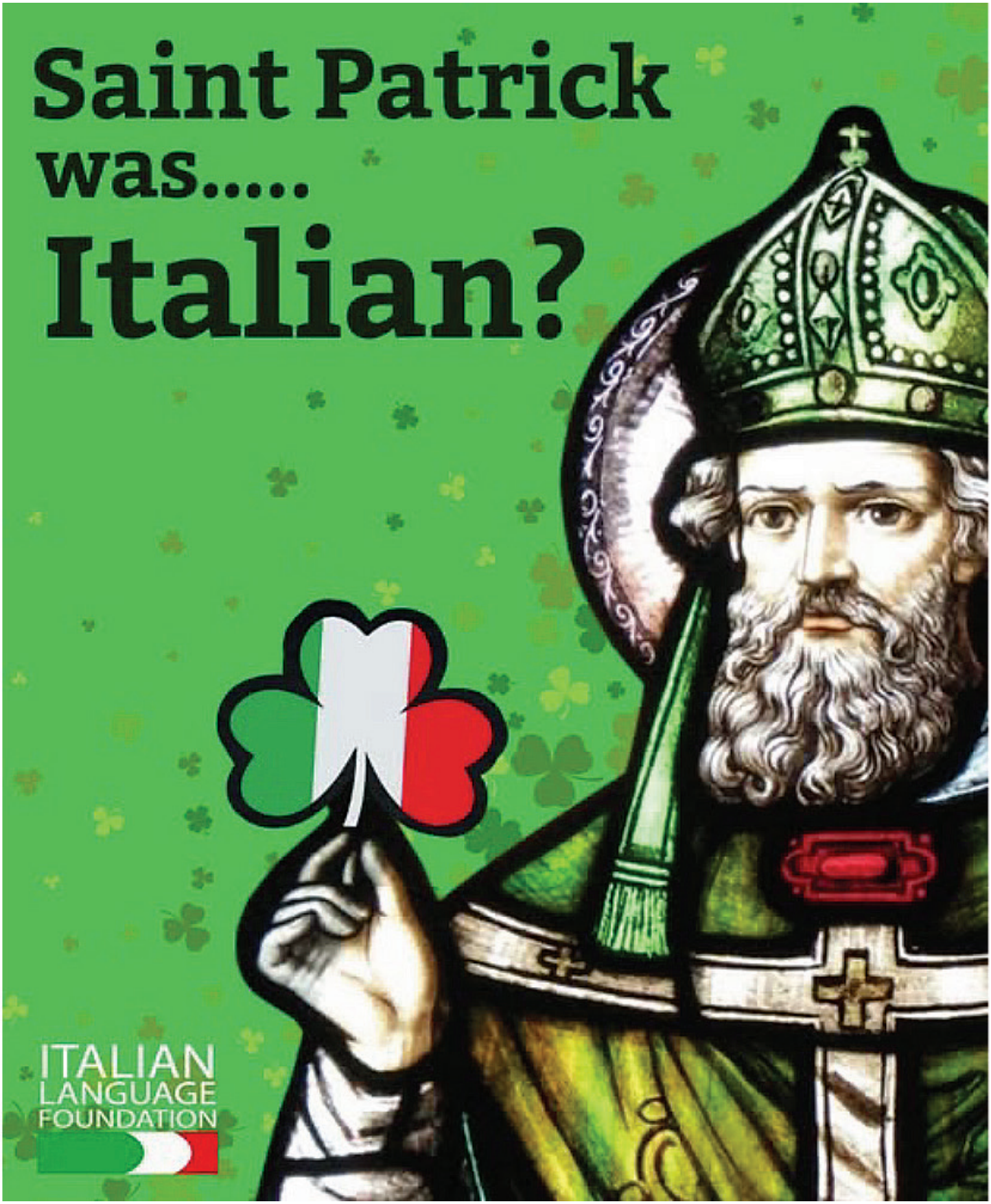

Was St. Patrick Italian?

When you think of St. Patrick's Day, images of shamrocks, leprechauns, green bagels and perhaps a few brews fill the mind. Could it also be true that St. Patrick himself may have had Italian roots? Depending on how you define Italian he may have been a paisano.

St. Patrick, originally known as Maewyn Succat, was born in Britannia, part of the Roman Empire, around the year 385 AD. While Britannia is modern-day Britain, St. Patrick's parents were believed to be of Roman descent. His father, Calpurnius, was a Roman official, a decurion, and a Roman Catholic deacon, and his grandfather, Potitus, was a Catholic priest (priesthood celibacy was not a rule). Both men were part of the Roman Christian community that had spread across the empire — including regions of present-day Italy. Given Rome's extensive influence, St. Patrick's family was, therefore, of Roman/Italian heritage.

The Roman Empire controlled much of Britain at the time, and its soldiers, officials, and settlers were from Italy/Italian descent. So, while St. Patrick may have been raised in Britain, his bloodline was deeply tied to the Italian peninsula. Now of course, Italy as a nation was not unified until 1861 but St. Patrick's Roman roots are well known so I will claim him as Italian.

I apologize to those who think that is a bit far-fetched.

The legend of St. Patrick tells us that as a teenager, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish raiders and enslaved in Ireland for several years.

During his captivity, Patrick turned to his Christian faith for strength, which later inspired his mission to return to Ireland as a Christian missionary. After escaping back to Britain, Patrick studied in monasteries, some of which had strong Roman and Italian Christian influences.

When Patrick returned to Ireland as a bishop, he dedicated his life to spreading Christianity and is famously credited with using the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity - one stem with three equal leaves (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). It is also believed that he usually dressed in blue (not green) robes to honor the Blessed Virgin. Legend continues that his feast day is famous because of the belief that Saint Patrick rid Ireland of "snakes". This legend is rather peculiar in that no snakes have been seen in Ireland since the last Ice Age but no argument here.

Though his works solidified him as Ireland's patron saint, his Italian lineage remains a lesser-known part of his incredible story.

If this Italian influence reflected my family interactions, then every float in the parade would be filled with people shouting, talking with their hands and wondering where is the holiday meal?

Local pubs instead of green beer, would be serving glasses of red wine, paired with wheels of provolone, salami and trays of biscotti, cannoli and sfogiatella.

Oh, and forget your friends. Celebrating Italian style would require carousing with your relatives – all…..of your relatives.

St. Patrick died on 17 March 461 in Saul, the place where he established and built his first church. He is said to have worked and lived for 40 years, devoting his entire life to spreading the Gospel and living in poverty.

For Italian-Americans, discovering St. Patrick's Italian heritage offers a unique connection to this widely celebrated holiday. It is a reminder that all can celebrate culture, faith, and tradition. So, when you grab your green attire this St. Patrick's Day, consider adding a wee touch of Italian red, white and, of course, green to honor St. Patrick who was Italian.