



U ACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

### **ST. PATRICK'S DAY MESSAGE 2014**

I am delighted to send best wishes for St Patrick's Day to the people of Ireland and to our global family and friends around the world.

The 17<sup>th</sup> of March is a day when we remember St Patrick and the very challenging circumstances under which he arrived on our shores. Despite the fact that he was a Roman-Briton who came to Ireland as a slave, Patrick forgave his captors and accepted the Irish he encountered as his own community. We recall the transformative power of his great spirit of forgiveness and generosity. It was this generous spirit that commended Patrick to be embraced as our beloved patron saint. His name has since become synonymous with an inclusive and authentic version of Irishness with its stress on the duty and the joys of hospitality.

For those of us who will spend St. Patrick's Day in Ireland, I hope its celebration, in the company of family and friends, will connect with those deep authentic aspects of Irish life which we share and of which we are rightly proud – our music, our culture, our sports, our natural environment and our rich community life.

In recent years, there has been a welcome increase in the number and nature of St. Patrick's Day celebrations facilitating greater participation by the diverse communities who make up the tapestry of our lives together. The many parades that now take place across the country express our citizens' pride in their home place; they are valuable expressions of community solidarity and are deserving of our participation and support.

St. Patrick's Day also marks the advent of spring, a season of renewal that is keenly welcomed after the severe weather of recent weeks and the destruction it has caused. Patrick's values of pastoral concern and human solidarity were much in evidence as members of the emergency services, local authority workers and good neighbours reached out to assist those who were afflicted by the storms and the flooding. It was an uplifting example of that spirit of friendship and generosity embodied by Patrick in his own lifetime and which continues to define our sense of community today.

As we reflect on the remarkable life of St Patrick, we are also conscious of how the theme of migration has remained an important part of our national narrative. It continues to play a significant role in defining us as a society and as a people. Today we celebrate our wider and diverse Irish family, to whom we remain connected by a strong cultural heritage and history. We are grateful for all they do to keep that heritage alive in their adopted homelands across the globe, as well as for their interest in, and tangible support for, Ireland's welfare and development. Today is a special day for all those Irish communities great and small across the world that come together in a spirit of pride and joy to celebrate their identity and their links of affinity and affection with their homeland of origin.

On St. Patrick's Day, our recent emigrants from Ireland will, in particular, be foremost in our thoughts. Where ever they may be, we hope that our sons and daughters are happy and prospering in their adopted communities and that they will have some opportunity, with friends and neighbours, to share the joyous celebration of our patron saint. I am especially conscious of Irish peacekeepers and humanitarian workers whose sense of service to vulnerable people in distant places prevents them from being home on this special day. Just as we remember our own emigrants, we should also be mindful of those migrants who have made Ireland their new home and, on this day in particular, make a special effort to include them in our national celebration.

To all those who share this island, to Irish people by birth or descent wherever they may be in the world and to those who simply consider themselves to be friends of Ireland, I wish each and every one of you a happy, peaceful and authentically Irish St. Patrick's Day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a stylized 'H'.

MICHAEL D. HIGGINS  
UACHTARÁN NA HÉIREANN  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MARCH, 2014