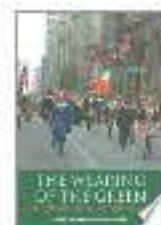


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The Wearing of the Green: A History of St Patrick's Day

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❧ *Modern Times, Troubled Times* ❧

affair. Exclusive and not very flashy, but not tacky either. Now it's more cosmopolitan . . . Yet for every clown and Newfie dog in a green bandana, a dozen publicity stunts must fall . . . Put a lid on hucksters selling green plastic bowler hats and shots of whiskey. Ban drinking on floats. Suggest the bands know how to play at least one Irish song. And here's a final revolutionary thought. Maybe, just maybe, it's time to ask a woman to be Grand Marshal.⁷¹

The commercialization, secularism and hedonism of the St Patrick's Day parade prompted clerics to try to remind Montrealers that this was, in fact, a religious occasion. **The Reverend Brian Boucher, Catholic chaplain at McGill University**, argued that 'despite the merriment associated with St Patrick's Day weekend, there is a serious spiritual side to the event based on the patron saint of Ireland'. He conceded that 'maybe over time the social side has predominated, but the roots are highly Christian . . . The foundation is faith.'⁷² In light of Curran's article this seemed a message of hope more than certainty. For the only sure thing was that Montreal's cosmopolitan and inclusive St Patrick's Day had, as its foundation, feelings of fun and pleasure.

If there was a tangible spiritual awakening on St Patrick's Day it might well have surfaced with the revival of the Toronto parade in 1988. Here again, though, the foundation was amusement, with little effort to remember the life of Ireland's patron Saint. Eamonn O'Loughlin, a member of the Irish-Canadian music and cultural association Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, announced that 'the parade will have no political or religious significance. It's a fun thing. Something like the Rose Bowl.'⁷³ O'Loughlin concluded that 'in the past there might have been some hostility between different segments . . . the old Orange and Green thing . . . Today people are more willing to live and let live. Toronto as a city has matured.'⁷⁴ As far as O'Loughlin was concerned 'Irish Canadians – whether from Dublin or Belfast – are one people and want to share their traditions, customs, culture and