



# The Church

## Church Bells

The oldest Christian bells in existence today are of Irish origin. They are made of iron plates, are wedged shaped, roughly rivetted, of hand size and in appearance much like a rude cow-bell. The most famous of these is one about six inches in height and four inches broad known as "the bell-of-St.-Patrick's will." It appears well established that this bell lay upon St. Patrick's breast, was taken from his tomb in 552, given into the custody of the Mulholland family and handed down from father to son for centuries. It is now preserved in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

In the eighth century, however, the large bells had their great development, at which time church towers were built for hanging the increasing sized bells, which were then regarded as an essential part of the church equipment and which had their own special form of blessing. In those days bells served a very practical purpose, for this was before the time of clocks and watches. Their sound aroused the monks at midnight to chant the Divine Office, summoned them from field and cell for the daily devotions, announced the angelus hour and at sunset assembled them for the evening "De Profundis." Indeed, the whole neighborhood marked the passage of time by the various signals from the monastery belfry.

Church bells did not become of immense size until more modern times. The mechanical difficulties of ringing extremely heavy bells probably restricted such development for in the eleventh century a bell in the church at Orleans weighing slightly over a ton was thought to be of remarkable size. Today, the beautiful bell of St. Peter's, Rome, weighs about nine tons. The largest bell in America and the largest swinging bell in the world is in St. Francis de Sales Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. It weighs about fifteen tons and cost nearly \$15,000.00. The largest bell in actual use in the world is in Moscow. It weighs 128 tons.